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Daily Report
Near East & South Asia

FBIS-NES-96-103 *28 May 1996*

CONTENTS

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INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Palestinian Affairs

Palestinian Affairs: 'Arafat Presents Policy Statement *[Jericho VOP]* 1
Palestinian Affairs: Hamas Source Says Attacks Against Israel To Stop *[Jerusalem Radio]* 21
Palestinian Affairs: Official on Visit to Shaykh Yasin, Prisoners Issue *[Jericho VOP]* 22
Palestinian Affairs: Hamas Leaflet Rejects Shaykh Yasin Call To Stop Terror *[Jerusalem TV]* 22
Palestinian Affairs: Sources Deride Reports That 'Abbas Is 'Arafat's 'Deputy' *[London AL-HAYAH 24 May]* 22

ARAB AFRICA

Algeria

Algeria: Government Condemns 'Barbaric' Murder of Monks *[Paris Radio]* 24
Algeria: FIS Official Denounces Killing of French Monks *[Paris Radio Monte Carlo]* 24
Algeria: Suspected Islamists Blow Up Railroad Track, Derail Train *[Paris International]* 24

Egypt

Egypt: Al-Qadhdafi Arrives in al-Sallum *[MENA]* 24
Egypt: Al-Qadhdhafi Arrives in Cairo, Meets With Mubarak *[Cairo Radio]* 24
Egypt: Al-Qadhdhafi Addresses Egyptian Bedouin Leaders *[AFP]* 25
Egypt: Al-Qadhdhafi Meets University Officials, Students *[Cairo Radio]* 25
Egypt: Mubarak, al-Qadhdhafi Complete Summit Discussions *[Cairo Radio]* 26
Egypt: Al-Qadhdhafi—Libya To Strengthen 'Cooperation' With Egypt *[MENA]* 26
Egypt: Al-Sharif Comments on Mubarak-al-Qadhdhafi Talks *[Cairo Radio]* 27

ARABIAN PENINSULA

Oman

Oman: Sultan Qabus Gives Palestinians $7 Million in Aid *[AFP]* 29

Qatar

Qatar: Health Minister Said To Escape Assassination Bid *[Paris Radio Monte Carlo]* 29
Qatar: Alleged Saboteurs Reportedly Arrested *[SPA]* 29

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia: Shipping Line Statement on Incident With U.S. Sub *[SPA]* 29

Yemen

Yemen: Al-Iryani on Arbitration Accord With Eritrea *[Paris Radio Monte Carlo]* 30
Yemen: Scuffle Between Police, Group Seizing Land *[Sanaa TV]* 30

IRAQ

Iraq: Saddam Urges Compliance With Dec '95 Economic Plan *[INA]* 32

Iraq: Official—UN Deal Exchange for French, Russian Promise *[AFP]* 32
Iraq: Al-Anbari on Contacts To Export Oil Via Syria *[AL-BAYAN 26 May]* 33
Iraq: Possibility of Oil Exports in Jul Seen *[AFP]* 33
Iraq: Minister on Ports Readiness To Receive Goods *[INA]* 34
Iraq: Explosion Reportedly Rocks Saddam's Birthplace *[Voice of Iraqi Islamic Revolution]* 34
Iraq: Regime Reportedly Bombs Kurdish Farms *[Voice of the People of Kurdistan]* 34
Iraq: PUK Offers To Discuss Peace Plan, Rejects Proposed Venue *[Voice of the People of Kurdistan]* 35
Iraq: Regime Reportedly Uses Paper Factory To Make Ammunition *[Voice of Iraqi Islamic Revolution]* 35

ISRAEL

Israel: Peres, Netanyahu Hold Televised Debate *[Jerusalem TV]* 36
Israel: Labor, Likud Strategists Claim Victory in TV Debate *[THE JERUSALEM POST 27 May]* ... 41
Israel: Poll Shows Peres More Convincing in TV Debate *[MA'ARIV 27 May]* 42
Israel: Polls Gage Voting Trend Before, After TV Debate *[YEDI'OT AHARONOT 27 May]* 42
Israel: Likud, Labor Leaders Explain 'Victory' in TV Debate *[HA'ARETZ 27 May]* 43
Israel: Press Reacts to Netanyahu-Peres Debate *[HA'ARETZ 27 May, etc.]* 43
Israel: TV Poll Shows Impact of Debate on Election Support *[Jeruasalem TV]* 45
Israel: Ba-Gad Withdraws; Darawshah for Peres; Yemin Yisra'el Stays *[Jerusalem Radio]* 45
Israel: Dahaf Poll Shows 3-Percent Peres Lead Over Netanyahu *[YEDI'OT AHARONOT 28 May]* .. 45
Israel: Geocartographia Poll Shows Peres With 3-Percent Lead *[YEDI'OT AHARONOT 28 May]* 46
Israel: Peres Interviewed on Elections *[HA'ARETZ 28 May]* 46
Israel: Netanyahu Interviewed on Peace Process, Elections *[London THE DAILY TELEGRAPH 28 May]* 50
Israel: Shin Bet Head—Higher Security Due to Plans To Harm Peres *[Jerusalem TV]* 51
Israel: Shin Bet Warned of Plans To Kill Peres on Election Day *[MA'ARIV 28 May]* 51

JORDAN

Jordan: King Speaks at Independence Day *[Amman TV]* 52
Jordan: King Reportedly Changes Plan on Anniversary Speech *[AL-BILAD 29 May]* 53
Jordan: Kuwaiti Amir, Iraq's Saddam Cable King on National Day *[AL-RA'Y 25 May]* 53
Jordan: Iraq's 'Aziz Reportedly To Visit 'Within Next Few Days' *[AL-RA'Y 25 May]* 53
Jordan: Source Denies Reports on Iraq's 'Aziz To Visit Jordan *[MENA]* 54
Jordan: Irbid Judge Escapes Assassination Attempt *[AL-RA'Y 27 May]* 54

LEBANON

Lebanon: 'Resistance' Reports Clash With Israeli Forces *[Beirut Radio]* 55
Lebanon: Israeli Patrol Comes Under Fire in South *[Voice of the South]* 55
Lebanon: Israelis Shell Southern Areas; Car Bomb Injures 2 *[VOL]* 55
Lebanon: Shelling Reported; Israel Said Seeking To Replace Lahd *[Beirut Radio]* 55
Lebanon: 'Terrorists' Fire at IDF Patrol; No Damage *[Jerusalem Radio]* 55
Lebanon: Fadlallah Praises Iran During Friday Prayers *[IRNA]* 56
Lebanon: Shiite Cleric Denounces Killing of French Monks in Algeria *[VOL]* 56
Lebanon: New Group Threatens To Retaliate for Bomber's Extradition *[Voice of the South]* 56
Lebanon: Fadlallah Says U.S. Wants Israeli Role in Reconstruction *[VOL]* 56
Lebanon: Nasrallah on Relations With al-Hariri, Israel, Apr Understanding *[VOL]* 56
Lebanon: Al-Hariri Returns After Talks With Khaddam in Damascus *[VOL]* 57

SYRIA

Syria: Al-Shar' Receives Qaddumi, Discusses Peres-Netanyahu Debate *[Damascus TV]* 58

Syria: AL-THAWRAH Sees 'No Difference' Between Peres, Netanyahu *[SANA]* 58

SOUTH ASIA

Afghanistan

Afghanistan: Rabbani, Hekmatyar Sign Peace Accord *[Kabul Radio]* 59
Afghanistan: High State Council Praises Rabbani-Hekmatyar Accord *[Kabul Radio]* 59

Bangladesh

Bangladesh: Government Issues Statement Concerning Army Rebellion *[Dhaka Radio]* 60
Bangladesh: Chief Adviser Warns Against Attempts To Disrupt Situation *[Dhaka Radio]* 60
Bangladesh: Gen. Rahman To Head Military Court Investigating Revolt *[AFP]* 61

India

India: Gowda Stakes Claim To Form Government *[Delhi TV]* 61
India: PM Admits Lack of Support To Win Confidence Vote *[Delhi TV]* 61
India: Vajpayee Comments on Vote of Confidence *[Dehli Radio]* 61
India: Campaign To Get Rid of Rao in Congress Snowballing *[BUSINESS STANDARD 27 May]* 62
India: Rao Camp Prepares Blueprint of 'Preconditions' *[INDIAN EXPRESS 25 May]* 62
India: Congress Confident Government Cannot Survive Trust Vote *[Delhi Radio]* 63
India: Update on Most Recent Kashmir Market Explosion *[AFP]* 64

Iran

Iran: Larijani—U.S. Policy in Middle East 'Illegitimate' *[IRNA]* 64
Iran: Shalikashvili Visit to Mideast Viewed *[Tehran Radio]* 65
Iran: UN Envoy—U.S. Invitation for Talks Contradicts Actions *[Tehran TV]* 65
Iran: Foreign Presence in Gulf Said Caused by Lack of Confidence *[TEHRAN TIMES 21 May]* 66
Iran: Tehran Paper Reports 'BBC's View' on VOA Persian Casts *[HAMSHAHRI 22 May]* 66
Iran: Fourth Phase of Khaiber Maneuvers Completed *[IRNA]* 66
Iran: Nateq-Nuri Praises Work of Majles Session at Closing *[Tehran TV]* 66
Iran: Khamene'i on Importance of Culture in Islamic Society *[IRAN NEWS 21 May]* 67
Iran: Increased Roles for Women Candidates in Fifth Majles *[SALAM 21 May]* 68
Iran: Nabavi Reacts to Deputy's Criticism of Ansar-e Hezbollah *[AKHBAR 22 May]* 68
Iran: Paper Reports on Energy Consumption, Subsidy Levels *[IRAN 21 May]* 69
Iran: Papers Ready To Aid AKHBAR *[AKHBAR 22 May]* 69
Iran: Press Board 'Reluctantly' Closes PAYAM-E DANESHJU *[AKHBAR 22 May]* 70
Iran: Plastic Computer Parts To Be Made for International Market *[RESALAT 21 May]* 70
Iran: State-Run Motor Industry Needs 'Fundamental Change' *[SALAM 21 May]* 71
Iran: Commentator Views Measures To Eradicate Poverty *[KAYHAN INTERNATIONAL 21 May]* 71

Pakistan

Pakistan: Bhutto's Abbottabad Speech Concerning Pakistan's Future *[THE NATION 24 May]* 72
Pakistan: Iran's Borujerdi, Pakistani Ministers Discuss Afghanistan *[Tehran Radio]* 76
Pakistan: Gunmen Ambush Shiite Vehicles, Kill 4, Injure 12 *[AFP]* 77
Pakistan: 3 Injured in 'Powerful' Bomb Blast *[Islamabad International]* 77

Palestinian Affairs

Palestinian Affairs: 'Arafat Presents Policy Statement

JN2305153196 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 0737 GMT 23 May 96

[Policy statement delivered by Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasir 'Arafat before the Legislative Council in Gaza; broadcast in progress—live]

[FBIS Translated Text] ['Arafat] ...There is no power on earth that can move it backward. The will of your people comes from the will of God because the will of your people is the will of life, and they will remain steadfast forever.

The Palestinian fate is being decided in the homeland today by the sons of this good, blessed land. The dark time, when we were deprived of our right to self-determination for half a century, when the Palestinian people were exiled in their own homeland and in the diaspora, when the name of the homeland was dropped from the political map but not from our hearts, conscience, and history, has gone for good. The elderly among us will not die and the young men among us will not forget, and the feet of the elephants will not be able to trample us.

We began the revolution from nothing and we are building the state from nothing. Your revolution was the longest one in the world in the twentieth century. It had a Palestinian face, an Arab heart, and international dimensions, roots, and branches. Your young state, whose edifice you are building today, is not a card to be placed in any pocket. It is the future Arab state, a free state of a nation of free and militant people, a democratic state, a state for the service of man, and a state that came from a dream which was materialized on the ground. It is the glowing sun [words indistinct] in the middle of the sky that is illuminating the large horizons of the homeland and dissipating darkness; and it is an eternal day of prophecy, whose bright sun is rising on a free land on which we are building the dignity of man and reviving the glory of its history.

The revolution experienced severe labor pains, and the labor pains experienced by the beginning of the authority of the forces of state are severer. It is a great jihad. We have succeed in launching the revolution and we have to succeed in the authority. Challenges facing us are as huge as our eternal national goals. We have no option other than to confront and overcome the difficulties and challenges. There will be no submission, retreat, and quietness; and no false reassurance will deceive us and deviate us from our goals. Let those near and far know that we are the movement of the Palestinian history and not the movement of impotence, reliance, and defeatism. None of us will be impotent, will be defeated, will submit, or will relinquish [words indistinct] chased your revolution a long time until it was overcome by the pouring blood in the plains of the homeland.

Those who bode misfortunes and told us "Go thou, and thy lord, and fight ye two, while we sit here" [Koran] do not hesitate today to level accusations against he noblest phenomenon in the Arab nation; namely, your blessed Palestinian revolution. However, their expectations were frustrated. Palestine rose from among the rubble and its authority and state are being formed. Its banners are fluttering over the homeland. The phoenix is emerging from among the ruins and ashes.

Brother speaker of the Palestinian Legislative Council; Brother members of the Palestinian Legislative Council; the great mission and challenge facing our people and Palestinian National Authority [PNA] are those of achieving our national goals of attaining full freedom, independence, sovereignty, and national deliverance from the epochs of occupation, now that our people have successfully completed the task of forming their PNA on the homeland over the past two years. This was done despite all the obstacles and all forms of challenges. Now is the time for restoring our national rights stipulated in the international charters and resolutions. A new phase of our struggle has started with the beginning of the final-status negotiations in Taba on 5 May 1996.

We need not reiterate here that the results of these negotiations will determine the fate and future of our people and future generations on this land. Hence, these negotiations are difficult and entail great responsibilities. Our people should prepare for extremely difficult negotiations, which we and our people want to be crowned with the establishment of the independent Palestinian state, with holy Jerusalem as its capital.

The strength of the PNA and the Palestinian negotiator stems from that of the people. There is no alternative to boosting and entrenching our national unity along democratic lines. The democracy which our people are building today as a sole option for governing themselves by themselves and for their own sake is the greatest accomplishment of this authority and the finest innovations of this people, who are proceeding along the path of national independence. Hence, national unity is important — we should go hand by hand and our hearts and minds should be united.

The democratic option that was embodied on the homeland during the presidential and legislative elections is truly a strong buttress and a sure guarantee for securing our steady and inalienable national rights. This option

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also asserts our people's determination and adherence to peace — the peace of the brave. Based on this, we should define before you the position of the Palestinian Council of Ministers on these issues, which are pivotal to our national struggle, especially since we have embarked on the final-status talks.

Our first position is: Complete abidance by the peace process and the agreements signed between the Palestinian and Israeli sides. Peace is a final, irrevocable option. Over the past two years, the PNA proved its faithful and meticulous commitment to the peace process and the agreements we signed in Washington and Cairo. The Israeli side has no pretexts or justifications for delay and procrastination of the implementation of these agreements. All pending issues in the interim phase must be solved so that we can have a serious start of the final status negotiations.

The Palestinian side's seriousness and credibility must be met by the same seriousness and credibility on the Israeli side. Peace is consolidated by fulfillment of the set and signed obligations between the two sides. The PLO Executive Committee and the Palestinian Government will present to the Legislative Council the national tasks that must be fulfilled so that we can enter the final status negotiations from a strong position that leaves no room for the other side to shirk its obligations. The final results of these negotiations will depend on the extent of the ability of the Palestinian side and its national forces to exploit all its strength with all brothers, friends, and peace-loving forces so that these negotiations can successfully lead to full national independence. At the same time, we call for expediting the Lebanese and Syrian tracks so that peace in the region will be just and comprehensive, as we agreed in Madrid, Washington, Cairo, and other places.

On the Palestinian level:

A. The basis of national unity should be expanded. All forces, factions, parties, and institutions inside and outside the homeland are called upon to boost national unity and rally around the PLO, the PNA, and our national objectives and rights.

B. The masses should be consulted and invited to participate. The adequate institutions and mechanisms for this purpose should be set up on the level of governorates, subdistricts, and public committees.

C. Democracy and political pluralism will be fostered. Democratization and the principle of the separation of powers will be enhanced, and a law on parties and societies will be enacted.

D. We should promote what the intifadah provided in the field of caring for the economy and working out plans and schemes to return to the land and directing the allocations of employment and productivity toward encouraging those who invest, build on, and cultivate their lands and establish our production cooperatives and the free economic market.

E. People's enthusiasm should be increased concerning work, confronting the pressures and encroachments on the Palestinian land, and working out plans and media campaigns to serve the idea of the linkage and the administrative, economic, and negotiating [word indistinct], so our Palestinian citizens—supported by the brothers and friends and the peace-loving ones—will assume their responsibilities for the overall negotiating process and the general national performance. Moreover, their enthusiasm will be increased to assume these responsibilities in the various fields of national action.

The role of the masses and their political forces is a central and pivotal role designed to overcome the political and economic difficulties facing us in order to limit their negative impact on our negotiating capabilities. Here comes the important role played by the Arab brothers, the friends, and the peace-loving ones in the world, led by the two cosponsors of the peace process and those who signed the agreements concluded between us and Israel.

F. We should persistently and urgently work to release the prisoners and detainees in the Israeli occupation jails, who are still detained or imprisoned despite the many promises and agreements to release them. This conflicts with the agreements signed by the Palestinian and Israeli sides.

The release of our detainees and our male and female prisoners constitutes a comprehensive national awakening designed to consolidate the national ranks and capability in confronting the challenges posed by the final-status negotiations and the challenges posed by the situation facing us.

On the Arab level:

A. We should work to restore Arab solidarity and linking the normalization to progress on the Palestinian track in the final-status negotiations and to expediting the Syrian and Lebanese tracks.

B. We should bolster coordination and cooperation with Egypt and Jordan on common issues such as borders, security, refugees, displaced persons, water, and economic cooperation. The tripartite summit held in Cairo among Egypt, Jordan, and Palestine was held to work out appropriate mechanisms for coordination and consultations on the level of the three leaders and on the ministerial level in various fields, so they will

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be a solid executive basis for the Arab summit, God willing.

C. We should work to expand the framework of trilateral coordination to include Syria and Lebanon to enhance the unified Arab position in the negotiating process.

D. We should call for an Arab summit to reaffirm pan-Arab commitment to the Palestinian people's essential and inalienable rights, their right to self-determination, repatriation, and the establishment of the independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital, and to enhance cohesion, solidarity, and pan-Arab unity under the new world order.

E. We should call for an Islamic summit to underscore Islamic stand and commitment to the Arab Islamic-Christian Jerusalem as the capital of the state of Palestine. Also, we should call on the Jerusalem committee to hold an urgent meeting.

F. We should continue to work with Christian religious leaders around the world, strengthening these contacts, and working jointly with them.

On the international level:

A. We should work seriously and continuously to activate the role of the cosponsors of the Madrid conference and the peace talks.

B. We should include the EU countries in the talks, benefiting from the readiness of the EU Council to bring about peace and to achieve stability and security in the Middle East. We should also activate the role of the United Nations, the Security Council, the General Assembly, and the UN agencies to participate in sponsoring these talks, in their capacity as the legitimate side who issued the international resolutions being discussed in the talks and on which the Madrid peace conference was based.

Second, the topics of the final-status negotiations:

The agreements signed in Oslo 1 and 2 build bridges of confidence between the Palestinian and Israeli sides. These agreements achieved their goals. [words indistinct] the final-status negotiations based on implementing international legitimacy resolutions to achieve a just and permanent peace in Palestine and throughout the Middle East. Solving all aspects of the Palestine question will result in spreading peace and stability. The Palestinian question is the central cause of the Arab nation.

Based on this, the government presents before your Legislative Council the principles, which govern our negotiating position in these talks:

A. The complete and meticulous implementation of the international legitimacy resolutions, particularly Resolutions 242 and 338;

B. The implementation of the land-for-peace principle, which was one of the foundations of the Madrid peace conference;

C. The implementation of a unified solution and the linking of the stages of the tracks.

Proceeding from these principles and bases, the government asserts that the objective of the final-status negotiations is the establishment of a sovereign independent Palestinian state and reiterating that holy Jerusalem is our capital as it was part of the lands occupied in 1967 and on which Resolution 242 applies. Also, the final-status negotiations will deal with the Israeli settlements built on Palestinian lands, the U.S. letter of assurances signed by Mr. Baker, and expediting the return of Palestinian refugees — who were forced to leave as a result of the 5 June 1967 aggression — to their homes. The government asserts the importance of activating the Egyptian-Jordanian-Palestinian-Israeli committee in charge of the issue of refugees, while guaranteeing the solution to the issue of Palestinian refugees, in accordance with UN Resolution 194. This resolution was agreed upon by all parties to the multilateral refugees committee.

Yes, and I repeat, this should be done by making sure that the issue of Palestinian refugees is solved based on UN Resolution 194, on which all parties to the Refugees Committee within the multilateral negotiations agreed. Furthermore, Israel's full withdrawal from all Palestinian and Arab territories occupied by Israeli forces during the 1967 war should be ensured. This will be realized by implementing the principle which stipulates the inadmissibility of seizing territories by force; guaranteeing the withdrawal of Israeli forces to the 4 June 1967 borders in implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 and the land-for-peace principle — the bases of the Madrid peace conference; and standing against all Israeli efforts aimed at seizing more territories.

Comprehensive peace and full withdrawal are interrelated and inseparable principles. Israel's efforts aimed at marking borders with bulldozers, settlements, and bypass roads to impose fait accompli at the negotiating table, will not succeed. The PNA announces its commitment to peace and regional cooperation. It stresses its adherence to international charters and norms which regulate relations among countries. Hence, Palestine's relations with neighboring countries are based on cooperation, peaceful coexistence, mutual security, solving differences through peaceful avenues, and economic

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cooperation to serve the interest of all peoples of the region.

The peace agreements signed between the PLO and the Government of Israel are binding to both the Palestinian and Israeli sides. The PLO and PNA reiterate, once again, their firm commitment to the text and spirit of these agreements. They also stress their eagerness to meticulously implement these agreement; to stand against efforts aimed at undermining security, stability, and peace; and to enforce the supremacy of law and order over everyone.

The Palestinian Government is currently preparing projects and plans to alleviate the suffering of our Palestinian people as a result of the Israeli siege on the Palestinian territories. One of the government's top priorities is to create jobs for its Palestinian labor force to work in our territories and national projects and to end dependence on the Israeli economy, especially since we should take into consideration that Israel to date has brought in 216,000 foreign workers to replace Palestinian workers.

This makes it imperative for us to immediately find alternative work opportunities for our brother workers to expedite work at large and small projects and industrial zones. Emphasis should be placed on agriculture and polytechnic institutes. This plan should not include mere promises. Rather, it should be an organized collective work. The Israeli Government should realize that the economy does not have one direction, and is not solely directed toward Israeli goods. To us, the economy is give-and-take. We should not serve as a market to which they export goods. No, the economy is give-and-take. This includes labor.

The Tasks of National Building and the Program of Action:

Beginning with its establishment on the homeland two years ago, the PNA's Government engaged in the battle of national construction in various domains.

Excuse me my brothers, in this statement, which was approved by my brother members of the PNA's Government, we furnished all the background [preceding word in English] of the past two years, because this is the first Palestinian parliament and should be aware of what has taken place during the past two years. Please, put up with us a little. This is your right, because this is the first Palestinian parliament, which is different from the Palestine National Council that represents all Palestinians, inside and outside the homeland.

Right from its establishment on the homeland two years ago, the PNA's Government engaged in the battle of national construction in various domains. It was wrong in many instances, but it proved to be right in many other cases. However, it is the right of our people to be proud, because the PNA is now solid, well-founded, and strong. The PNA is building a new life and society for the homeland. The first Palestinian Government laid the foundations of the new Palestinian state and society. Within this context, the new government presents to the Legislative Council its national program of action on the basis of the integral relationship between the executive and legislative branches and the independence of the judicial branch.

First, we should discuss education and higher education.

There is no doubt that educating the new generation in a distinguished way constitutes a safety valve, a criterion for progress in the Palestinian society, and a source of pride for us. Through distinguished education, for which our people are known, and through programmed education that depends on automation, we will enter the new century on an equal footing with the world community. Automation, automation is an Arabic word related to the computer system. Automation, automation, which some brothers and engineers may not know. You [Hanan 'Ashrawi] know English, but I am talking about some brothers like me. Automation is like the word radio. We should also focus on polytechnic issues to achieve development in all walks of life. Approximately 720,000 students, making up a quarter of the Palestinian people, are studying. Therefore, education covers a large sector and is a big future investment.

So, this government will do its best to raise the standard of education and higher education. Regarding school buildings, the Ministry will finish its projects. Please be a little patient with me. Sir [not further identified], come and sit beside your brother Ziyad [word indistinct]. Marwan, you have not stopped talking since the beginning of the session. You know, Hanan is refusing to reply to you. Do you think I am talking here but do not see what is going on there. By God, I see there, there, and there, and I see in Janin. I do not see with my eyes but with my heart [laughing].

So, the government will do its best to raise the standard of education and higher education. Regarding school buildings, the Ministry and the PNA will finish their projects to maintain the existing schools and build new ones that can absorb the great annual increase in the number of students which is estimated at 70,000 new students per year until the year 2000. This includes maintenance of school furniture, extra curricular activities, laboratories, libraries, and automation.

Regarding administration, the Ministry will modernize the administrative apparatus by using computer programs, which actually began when it introduced the

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computer system in the general exams. It is expected that administrative information on school buildings and financial affairs will be programmed within one year to facilitate the administrative work of the Education Ministry.

The government attaches great importance to horizontal expansion of education in Palestine, particularly in the Palestinian countryside. It is also necessary to expand girls' schools, to spare girls the difficulty of traveling from one village to another for education.

The Education Ministry opened over 420 new classrooms last year. Some schools have to work shifts to absorb this large number of students. No single classroom was built under the occupation. Since its assumption of power, the government has effected a major change in the ratio of the number of teachers to students. However, this ratio still is lower than in developed states. In the past two years, the ministry added about 4,000 new teachers and employees. The PNA hopes that there will be new opportunities to absorb about 2,500 teachers and employees this year to improve this ratio.

In the field of technical and vocational training, the Education Ministry will work in full coordination with the Labor Ministry on joint programs to lift the standard of training and increase the number of students in this field. The rate of technical and vocational training students now amounts to only 3 percent of the number of students. This is one of the lowest rates in the world. Because this kind of training is very expensive, the PNA and the Education and Labor Ministries will work to lay down a joint plan in the field of vocational training. This is an important issue that must be given urgent attention. The Education Ministry has for a year been working to promote four new polytechnic schools. These are the Khadduri, al-'Arrub, Dayr al-Balah, and Ramallah polytechnic schools. The ministry has also increased its programs in the field of technical training. This is a speedy expansion in this field which the government will maintain. However, this is not sufficient.

Brothers, the states that respect themselves focus on polytechnics. No advancement can be achieved without technical training. It is shameful that only 3 percent of students are in this field. This is a duty that must not be undertaken by the PNA only, but also by each of us. We must cooperate to improve it.

In the field of curricula and the educational system, a Palestinian curricula center affiliated with the Education Ministry has been established. It will lay down a five-year plan to change and develop all the current curricula. In addition, the educational system will be changed so that foreign languages, technology, and computer sciences are introduced into schools. This program is a major opportunity to bring about a comprehensive change so that our generations can enter the 21st century with full confidence.

At this point, brothers, I want to say that if we enter the 21st century with our students at various stages of study without computers, then we will be regarded as an underdeveloped state. This must be our philosophy, objective, and strategy. In Israel, all schools have computers. We must have computers in all schools, even if we have to tighten our belt. We know that we have difficult circumstances. However, believe me, computers are more important than building roads. In the future, computers will enable us to build roads, but roads do not build computers.

Moreover, during the next few months, the government will seek to present draft laws dealing with general and higher education in order to develop laws that have been valid since before 1967. The government will also seek to unify laws between the two wings of the homeland in the West bank and the Gaza Strip. In the field of improving the performance of teachers, the authority and the ministry will continue its large-scale program to train teachers in all fields of school and educational training and administration. The ministry will also continue to train leaders.

The government will deal with new fields. ['Arafat says to his audience, who corrected a mistaken pronunciation, that he is an engineer and not a secretary or an expert in the Arabic language] Such fields include special education for handicapped children, eradicating illiteracy, adult education, and irregular education. Moreover, the authority will continue the policy of encouraging the private sector in the field of education. The private sector takes 10 percent of the education burden under the Ministry of Education's supervision and observation. The authority and the ministry will continue the good and active coordination with the UN Relief and Works Agency [UNRWA] in the administrative and technical areas, and in school construction. We will also focus on the Palestinian identity of education.

My brothers, it is very important to improve performance in these fields. It is also very important to coordinate and carry out sound supervision over the UNRWA, especially its educational programs. Supervising the UNRWA's educational programs is not any less important than supervising the loaf of bread this agency distributes or the house it builds.

In the field of administrative development, the ministry was able — through the general directorate for educational development and studies, in cooperation with the Central Statistics Department — to monitor statistics in educational fields. We now have the statistics that have

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been missing for 27 years, which helps the ministry develop appropriate plans for all fields.

In the area of quality printing of school text books, during the first year, we managed to print 20 percent of the amount of text books inside the homeland. This rate increased to 80 percent this year. We will be able to print all text books inside the homeland next year, with God's help.

The ministry and the NA will seek with all its abilities to expand the powers of the Education Directorates and the powers of the schools to avoid administrative centralism, which is the cause of rigid curricula that limits creativity. The authority will seek to achieve its slogan: Centralization of planning and not the centralization of implementation.

In the field of student activities, the ministry will continue to encourage students to participate in extracurricular activities, which were halted for many years. Now these activities are practiced in our schools with the aim of providing our students with better means of growth. The ministry and the PNA will also give great importance to health, uniforms, and cleanliness in schools. Emphasis will also be placed on the national education programs during the summer vacations in the centers, camps, and gatherings that will be organized throughout the summer. Regarding international educational relations, the PNA will continue its constant efforts in the area of international cooperation on education with the international organizations and the educationally developed countries. Many projects in this domain have been accomplished. We will continue to carry out our tasks with unrelenting and high caliber efforts.

In the realm of higher education, we will develop our higher education institutes. This encompasses planning and expanding scientific and technological education — some call for separating higher education from education at large; we will look into this request, God willing. More than 80 percent of the students who passed the general secondary examination join the Palestinian higher education institutes despite the current difficulties in this respect. The ministry will also adopt a position on establishing private universities in the homeland in accordance with the higher education law. The ministry will also improve the quality of education provided by the intermediate colleges — the two-year post-secondary examination system. This education should become a professional and technical one. The program will be completed by the year 2000. The PNA and the ministry, in cooperation with all ministries and international establishments, will develop higher education in Gaza and pay special attention to technical and technological education.

Second—The local government and municipalities: Regarding the local government, my government's statement focuses on the following issues:

1. The Ministry of Local Government embarked on and will complete the drafting of a formula for local government, represented in instituting elected councils in every Palestinian area where 1,000 people or more live — I should say that there is little exaggeration here regarding the issue of 1,000 people, forgive us for this; I say this because I do not want you to question me about this in the future [laughter].

My government is determined to arrange an electoral process later on, after your esteemed council endorses the two draft laws on the local councils and elections of these local councils. Therefore, this government is keen on forming a council, committee, or any form of local authority in every city, town, and village on the territory of the PNA. In this context, the Ministry of Local Government, during the past year, formed or replaced more than 170 municipal or village councils or local committees. My government will finalize the draft laws on the formation of local councils and the elections of local councils. These draft laws will replace the laws that are still effective in the Palestinian territories. This will help us eliminate double laws. The government is keen on finalizing these draft laws or any other draft laws or regulations in this area.

My government is determined, through the Local Government Ministry, to reduce the gap between Palestinian rural areas and cities. Of course, this is not only the task of the Local Government Ministry, but also all ministries, including the Ministries of Education, Agriculture, and Public Works.

Therefore, the National Authority has formed a ministerial committee to study the needs of rural areas to help Palestinian citizens stay on their land and not move to cities. There is a need to make available more than $700 million for electricity, telephone, and agricultural services, building schools and roads, and water projects in the first phase of rural areas development. May God help us, where are we going to get the 700 millions?

My government is working to make available sources of financing to implement vital and rural projects which the citizens need, as quickly as possible, from donors or national, regional, and international banks.

The areas of water, roads, village entrances, sewage systems, and waste have special priority in these projects. An agreement was reached to develop the infrastructure of Palestinian [word indistinct] through a World Bank program, which we hope will begin in the beginning of August. Within this framework, the ministry

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implemented — through coordination with a number of national and international institutions — projects estimated at more than $16 million in 1995. The ministry is now working to implement projects estimated at more $11 million. It has prepared a plan to carry out projects which cost more than $65 million. May God help us make these amounts available.

The government exerts special efforts to develop the skills of people working in Palestinian municipalities. Therefore, it organized and is organizing a number of training courses and workshops inside and outside the homeland for the employees of these municipalities. Agreements have been reached with a number of sisterly and friendly countries to implement these programs. Agreements will also be reached with these countries to develop the skills of workers in Palestinian municipalities and local councils. In this regard, more than 20 workshops were organized last year and there are plans to hold more training courses and workshops next year through coordination with local and international instructors.

From the government's belief in collective action and coordinating efforts, particularly among Palestinian municipalities, the Federation of Palestinian Local Councils will be established soon. This matter is important because it will unify efforts and help benefit from the experience of and exchange of information among these municipalities. Municipalities will benefit from their big sisters.

The government is reviewing the structural charts of Palestinian cities and villages so that they will be in harmony with population needs. This matter is particularly important so that citizens can obtain the necessary permits to resolve the problem of housing. In this regard, the structural planning of the village of 'Uja and the city of Qabatiyah, for example, has been accomplished within the framework of the limited capability of the ministry. We are also reviewing all old charts for the purpose of modernizing them.

The PNA embarked on a national comprehensive plan for naming and numbering streets in Palestinian cities, in accordance with what is done in large cities, particularly in the cities and municipalities which do not have this system.

Through the international aid program, the Local Government Ministry [words indistinct] the administrations in the municipal and village councils at present. These administrations will be transformed from manual ones into ones using computers and other devices. In this regard, the ministry, in cooperation with international institutions, prepared a list of office equipment for 88 Palestinian populated areas this year.

Work is under way to spread the unified auditing system in the municipalities of Nabulus and Gaza, and it will be spread to all municipalities at a later date. Moreover, work is under way to provide the municipalities with office equipment and tools such as computers, copiers, communications devices, cars, and others things to facilitate the work of these municipalities. May God help us regarding these costs. We hope we will quickly accomplish this in view of our limited resources.

3. Reconstructing the Judicial Branch:

The Gaza Strip separated from the West Bank approximately 50 years ago due to the incidents that have rocked this land since Israel was established on it. As a result, two different judicial systems were established in these two areas. One system has its roots dating back to the Jordanian era, and the other dates back to the British mandate.

While Jordanian laws are enacted in the West Bank, the British mandate laws are still enacted in the Gaza Strip with certain amendments that were made by the Egyptian administration.

During more than a quarter of a century of Israeli occupation, which came after the Egyptian and Jordanian eras, the military government in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank tightened its control of the judicial organs and the public prosecutor departments and deprived them of the independence they used to enjoy, and greatly reduced their powers. This also included the practicing of law. You know, the occupation did not respect the independence of the judiciary at all. The administrative ruler used to do whatever he liked.

Reviving the civil judicial and legislative branches as well as the legal establishment in the coming phase and rebuilding and reorganizing it on new bases is vital to enable these two branches to play their role which is indispensable to community life.

We believe that rebuilding the judicial branch in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip on firm bases of independence constitutes the real guarantee for the supremacy of law and for establishing a community based on the principles of democracy and equality.

In cooperation with the competent circles, the Ministry of Justice worked out a comprehensive concept for what the judicial branch should be in the coming phase, particularly after the Palestinian Legislative Council oversees the legislative process and its subsequent endorsement by the president.

Independence of the Judiciary Branch:

The judiciary branch can only carry out its mission of spreading justice among citizens and imposing the law

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on everyone if it enjoys real independence from the executive branch, so it can play its sacred role away from influential quarters, whether they are governmental or nongovernmental quarters.

Achieving this objective requires the issuance of a law on the independence of the judiciary which organizes the way to appoint judges and members of the pulic prosecution, and also establishes ways to transfer, dismiss, deputize, and question them. The most prominent requirement for this law is to establish a higher judicial council in addition to the chief qadi, similar to neighboring states, as well as appointing special cadres for the judicial branch and members of the public prosecution.

The judicial men and members of the public prosecution should be provided with an economic environment that will make them immune to the possibility of being affected by or against responding to anything other than the requirements of justice and law. Such an environment will also keep them away from anything that could affect their honesty and pure conscience. A secure and decent life should be guaranteed for them in a way befitting the important vital positions they occupy.

The Freedom of Litigation:

Among the familiar principles in the world is the principle that the doors of the courts are open to all, and that the right of everyone to resort to the courts in order to find justice, protect his rights, or lift injustice done to him is an absolute and sacred right that should not be restrained. Hence, there should be a cancellation of the restrictions preventing the suing of the government. Be happy. Cancellation of the restrictions preventing the suing of the government, Mr. Hasan [not further identified]. You are not following me, of course. You are talking with Dr. Muhammad [not further identified]. Canceling the restrictions preventing the suing of the government or setting as a condition that one should obtain prior permission for litigation.

The Fees of Courts; Unifying and Promoting the Laws:

A wide legislative process must begin. This process will aim to unify and promote the laws enacted in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. This may appear to be an objective that needs great efforts and a long time. However, laws define the boundaries of justice which were accepted by the community through its representatives in the Legislative Council which endorses these various laws. The difference among laws will lead to differences and disturbance in administering justice. For this purpose, the Ministry of Justice entrusted the Fatwa and Legislative Office with working out a plan to achieve this objective as follows.

The first stage: To collect and review all the laws and regulations and decrees that have been in force in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip from 1918 until 1994. A contract was signed with the Bi'r Zayt University Legal Studies Center and the necessary sum allocated to it was approved by the World Bank.

The second stage: The establishment of specialized legal committees comprising Palestinian and Arab experts and friends that will study the laws referred to them. They then will draft a law that will be applicable to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and that will be submitted to the Legislative Council for approval.

Legal Expertise:

It is no secret and it is no shame if we admit that legal expertise in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip is not commensurate with the expertise lawmen enjoy in other countries. This is due to many factors, including the absence of an institute or a faculty that promotes and spreads legal knowhow in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, not to mention the deficient state of affairs of the courts, and of the lawyers profession under the Israeli occupation.

The restructuring of the judicial branch as mentioned earlier can only be done if the necessary legal expertise becomes available in the country to fill the new positions that are needed by all types of courts. We must task legislators from the Arab countries who have adequate legislation expertise to offer us the assistance we need. We also must solicit the assistance of Palestinian legal experts in the Diaspora and have them return and assist us in this respect. You know that we have Palestinian judges even in the worldwide renowned judiciary, the British judiciary such as Dr. Eugene [not further identified] and others.

5. [as heard] The organization of the Legal profession

Lawyers are entrusted with defending justice and the supremacy of the law. Lawyers play a basic role in allowing the judicial branch perform its duties of enforcing the law. Although the legal profession is a private sector activity, it performs a public role in the life of society. The judiciary cannot work without it. As the legislator has taken care to organize the judiciary with a law that defines the qualifications of judges and their working conditions, the restructuring of the judicial branch requires the restructuring of the legal profession too. In this respect, the following steps should be taken:

—Issuance of a new law that permits the formation of a Palestinian bar association in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip that will be called the law of the Palestinian Bar Association. Brothers, you know that part of the bar association still is affiliated to the Jordanian bar, and

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we have another branch, here in Gaza. The formation of a single bar association for the lawyers in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to be called the Palestinian Bar Association.

—All lawyers in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip who had a license to practice law before 5 June 1967 and all lawyers who obtained such a license after this date will be members of the Palestinian Bar Association.

—Any Palestinian lawyer from the Diaspora has the right to become a member of the Palestinian bar association.

Fourth, social affairs:

The Ministry of social affairs will implement the policy of the Palestinian National Authority in the social field for the various ages on the basis of equality, social justice, and without any discrimination as to religion and sex. It also abides by the policy of the national authority and the agreements it concludes with other parties. The ministry will focus in its policy on two complementary requisites: a general strategic requisite, and an incremental requisite. It will do so by establishing a system for comprehensive and integrated social development. The strategic requisite consists of taking care of the individual through the various stages of life, starting from birth, through childhood, youth, and old age, and tackling the problems Palestinian citizens face that have to do with maternity, childhood, delinquency, disability, the promotion of the role of women, elderly people, the martyrs' families, the detainees, the wounded, the family in general, and small communities by working to implement programs having to do with social care, training, and development.

I received through Brother Abu-'Ala' [Ahmad Quray'] a memorandum some Legislative Council brother members had sent me asking that the detainees and the martyrs should have their own ministry. This is being studied. The ministry will also work to upgrade social services from the level of voluntary work, social care, and charity to the level of education and social development based on economic, social, educational means to activate poverty-stricken communities in popular quarters, camps, and the countryside and to prepare a productive citizen who contributes to the production operation, by depending on the expertise he has as a means for becoming an active member of society.

The government will effect a balanced growth of social services for all needy sectors by providing these sectors with all the necessary services, fighting negative phenomena, and addressing problems. The government will supervise social services and the work of charity organizations and local and international social institutions. This will be done by passing laws and regulations that ensure their smooth performance and developing social services that are performed by local development councils. The government will also work to identify the needs of local communities through its directorates and social offices and centers.

There should be coordination between the Ministry of Social Affairs and the PLO institutions concerned with social affairs to reflect the unity of the Palestinian people at home and abroad. The current phase is based on the changing circumstances and the needs and problems that arise, which may require qualifying personnel and conducting research and studies to implement development programs.

The 1996/1997 plan of the Ministry of Social Affairs will include the following areas: Administrative planning and development, maternity and childhood, care for the family and promoting the role of women, developing local communities, rehabilitating and observing the conduct of juvenile delinquents, rehabilitating the wounded and disabled people, caring for old people and orphans, social awareness campaigns, caring for the families of martyrs, detainees, and wounded people, rehabilitating prisoners who were freed and trying to find jobs for them, and caring for charity organizations and local and international nongovernmental organizations. May God help us implement this program.

Fifth, in the field of housing:

It is the right of each citizen to have a place in which to live. It is the duty of the government to provide housing for those who do not have shelter. Housing in Palestine plays an exceptional role. It meets the needs of our people to have a decent dwelling and shelters needy people, who include those who have returned and the refugees and displaced who are expected to return, as well as those dwellers who, during the occupation and as a result of its policies, were deprived of a dwelling. In addition, setting up houses will reduce unemployment, since it will activate construction work and employ a large number of engineers and technicians and develop the construction industry in Palestine. It is a fact, my brothers, that construction needs a lot of workers, including laborers, supervisors, engineers, and employers. You know that PECDAR [Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction] has a housing center which is still operational. We are now trying to have full coordination between the housing board and the Housing Ministry. Therefore, the government will pay special attention to the housing sector, by following a transparent housing policy and a national housing strategy based on the following:

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—Land:

Pursuing a wise policy to use the property of the state, which has a small area. Dividing the land equally among housing projects and exploiting public social centers to support the needy and those who return. Following a policy of cooperative societies, abandoning individual distribution, enforcing the law firmly against those who encroach on state property, and defining the area of state property. Issuing laws and regulations to protect the land for which we have made sacrifices and offered martyrs.

—Housing:

The government is determined to pursue a policy that will enable citizens obtain houses through the establishment of a real estate mortgage market. This market will be funded by the finance bodies that will be established to finance houses for those in the low-income bracket. Realizing the importance of the housing crisis, the government seeks to encourage investment by enacting laws and regulations enabling the private sector to contribute to the construction of low-cost housing units to provide houses for those needing them, and to secure government land for this purpose at token prices to avoid having the citizen pay prohibitive prices for them.

Brothers, unfortunately, some of the houses that were built before the National Authority assumed power were houses not for the needy but for those who are above that level. This is a mistake which should be corrected in the future and in the houses that remain vacant. This means that two apartments with an area of 140 square meters each could be transformed into three apartments. They will still remain adequate apartments. This will not cost us much.

—Cooperative projects:

The government adopts a policy of encouraging the system of...[pauses] Hasan [not further identified], my brother, you said that during the negotiations he [not further identified] is an eloquent interlocutor opposite the Israeli negotiator. That's why he is doing the same thing here. [laughter]

—Cooperative societies:

The government encourages the system of public housing and cooperative societies and will secure the necessary funds for these societies through finance institutions, the Housing Bank and others.

—Building in unauthorized areas:

In the absence of the National Authority, construction in unauthorized areas increased; these area areas where the minimum health and environment conditions was lacking. From this premise, the government will seek to earmark areas for these citizens who resorted to this method to secure a roof over their heads whether before, during, or after occupation. Thus, they imposed a fait accompli that should be tackled.

—The refugees camps:

The desperate state of affairs in the refugee camps has been the responsibility of the entire international community. These camps impose on us the improvement of their living conditions and providing their inhabitants with health and education services and job opportunities. We also are dutybound to ease overpopulation in these camps through projects that will be prepared for this purpose. We know beforehand that this is a momentous task that requires participation on the human and national level and cooperation from relief organizations and other international agencies to improve their living conditions.

Sixth: Public Health:

The public health budget was $60 million. This budget became $75 million in 1995, and reached $100 million in 1996. At the same time, the Health Ministry submitted its projects and its development plan to the donor states which discussed them and approved $50 million for 1996. This means that the state has to provide $50 million. This will lead to the reconstruction and expansion of buildings, the modernization of their equipment as well as of the primary health care centers, and hospitals in the West Bank governorates and the Gaza Strip governorates.

—Primary health care:

This budget will be used to implement 35 percent of the health infrastructure by building and equipping 18 primary health care centers in the West Bank that will be geographically distributed in accordance with the needs, and 10 centers for the Gaza Strip governorates distributed according to the national health plan.

These health centers will serve 50,000 citizens round the clock and will provide them with comprehensive services in the field of family care, emergency treatment, deliveries, and specialized clinics equipped with modern diagnosis equipment such as laboratories, and ultrasound equipment. They will also be responsible for health education, a healthy environment, school and mental health.

[Unidentified speaker, interrupting] Brother Abu-'Ammar, please [words indistinct]

['Arafat] What can I do? I am not a civilian like you. I am a military man. I used to address an entire brigade without using a microphone [preceding word in

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English]. What can I do? You are a polite civilian whose voice is more beautiful than mine. I nominate you for the prize of the most beautiful voice. What can I do? I have a loud voice. When I was a student and some of you were with me as reserve officers, I used to address an entire brigade without a microphone [preceding word in English]. I read carefully the important parts [of the policy statement] while the details will be distributed to you. Twenty copies of this policy statement are now with brother Abu-'Ala' [Ahmad Quray'] and God willing, 80 copies will be ready by the end of the day. We now know that I have an ugly voice as you yourself have testified and that your voice is beautiful, 'Abbas Zaki.

Additionally, this plan provides for the establishment of smaller health centers to cater for the needs of villages in governorates. For example, in the Hebron Governorate,

['Arafat answering an indistinct question by an apparently Legislative Council member] For whom? No. [words indistinct] He is like al-Shawwa [the name of a Legislative Council member from Gaza] Is he so special? He is like anybody else. [indistinct words] It is not I who distributes copies of the statement. It is the speaker who does so.

Additionally, this plan provides for the establishment of smaller health center to cater for the needs of villages in governorates. For example, there will be 16 centers in the small villages of the Hebron Governorate, not to mention three other regular centers in bigger villages and townships. The same applies to all other governorates of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

The health plan aims to implement the second and third [?stages] in the same way in the year 1997-98 at a cost of $50 million every year.

The secondary care given by hospitals in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip governorates in accordance with the modernization plan—Some $70 million will be used to effect a 30-percent increase in the number of hospital beds and introduce advanced specialties through contracts with Spain, France, Japan, Greece, and other friendly nations. Our hospitals and comprehensive health care centers in cities, villages, camps, and [words indistinct] will be granted $30 million over phases in the year 1996-1997.

Laboratories and care for them, for example, Italy has provided $3.5 million to improve the status of laboratories.

Introducing new departments, such as school health, dental services, family planning and protection, health education, continuing education, preventive medicine, and environmental hygiene—an environmental hygiene department has been established to promote the masses' awareness of environmental issues in the governorates and set up and implement programs to avoid water and air pollution, monitor sewerage, and fight epidemics and insecticides.

Creating the Women's Health Promotion Department, the Societal Psychology Department, the Engineering and Maintenance Department, and the Medical Services Department. The latter are the services of the National Security Forces. Great efforts are being made to promote these services in terms of capabilities, equipment, and centers.

—The Palestinian Red Crescent Society:

The Palestinian Red Crescent Society is making great efforts in various areas of the homeland. Efforts are currently under way to unify the work and efforts of this society's branches in these areas and cities. We should not overlook the great responsibilities the Red Crescent Society is assuming toward our communities and camps in Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Yemen, Tunisia, Libya, Sudan, and elsewhere in the world, particularly in Africa.

7. Labor and labor force—The issue of labor, unemployment, and employment is one of the most significant indicators of economic growth in the world. It is the major stimulant of progress. Moreover, it is the real yardstick against which the process of economic development is judged. This issue is crucially important for the Palestinian national economy due to reasons related to the circumstances created by Israeli occupation, which turned the Palestinian community into a major creator of labor, which in turn marginalized the local economic process to the advantage of the Israeli economy. Moreover, a large number of our Palestinian farmers have been taken away from their agricultural environment, and this has produced losses in this sector.

We have to handle the high rate of unemployment in our community, which has been aggravated by the continuing siege and closure enforced by the [Israeli] Government against our community, as this is one of the most prominent challenges and tasks facing us.

The recent siege, which is still in place, has greatly harmed the Palestinian national economy. This siege not only deprived Palestinian workers in Israel of their right to work; it also dismembered the Palestinian local market because the siege isolated 465 population centers in the governorates of the West Bank from each other and from the Gaza Governorates. This shows the serious consequences of this siege, if we take into consideration the fact that 60 percent of Gaza's industrial and agricultural products are marketed in

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the West Bank governorates. Also, the products of the West Bank governorates are marketed in the Gaza Governorates.

The recent siege has aggravated the problem of unemployment and caused a high increase in its rate. The unemployment rate now stands at 51 percent, while before the siege the rate of absolute unemployment was 18.3 percent — which is high — and 38 percent for partial unemployment in the governorates of the West Bank and Gaza. As a result of this siege, the daily losses in Palestine totaled more than $6 million. If we take into consideration the fact that 50 percent of partial unemployment is considered absolute unemployment in light of the instability of partial employment and its low wages, then the total number of unemployed workers prior to the recent siege will total 150,000 workers, which is around 28 percent of the total labor force, estimated at 530,000 laborers.

The number of unemployed workers has increased as a result of the recent siege to 270,000, that is around 50 percent of the total labor force. This is because more than 120,000 laborers lost their jobs in the Israeli labor market and more than 75,000 laborers in the local market were not able to go to work as a result of the recent closure and siege.

A careful look at the Palestinian economy and the labor rates shows that the main problem that causes unemployment lies behind two points:

A. The Israeli occupation and the systematic policies of the Israeli Government to stifle the Palestinian economy, before and after the establishment of the Palestinian Authority.

B. The national economy's poor operational capability. While the gross domestic product for 1990-1993 grew by 4.9 percent annually, the growth rate of [words indistinct] did not exceed 5.3 percent annually for the same period.

Instructions to address the growing unemployment: The challenge of unemployment is the most prominent challenge to the government's policies. The government will work to find radical solutions to address the growing problem of unemployment and reduce it to internationally acceptable standards, that is around 10 percent maximum. For this purpose, my government will do the following:

Promoting investment to create real development, especially in the infrastructure, to enhance the Palestinian economy's capability to absorb more workers and create more employment opportunities. Increasing the labor force absorption capability requires annual growth rates and an investment rate of $1.1 billion annually for the next three years.

Any decrease in annual growth rates and the aforementioned volume of investment will perpetuate the high rates of unemployment. This requires the creation of other labor markets to reduce the high rate of unemployment. If we suppose that the Palestinian economy will not be able to achieve the desired enlargement, will it then be possible to achieve an annual growth rate of 4.5 percent with an investment totaling $600 million, which is equal to 15 percent of the gross domestic product?

Working to halt the Israeli measures of closures and sieges and reopening the Israeli labor market with an average of [1-minute break in reception] which accommodated a portion of the Palestinian surplus labor, whose accommodation was largely reduced in the wake of the Gulf war, to accommodate some 85,000 workers and employees over seven years; that is, an average of 12,000 workers per year.

Brothers: You are well aware that we had 440,000 Palestinians in Kuwait. They were expelled. Only 17,000 remained in Kuwait, because they had nowhere else to go and no travel documents to use.

['Arafat responding to a query by apparently a Legislative Council member] From the addresses. [words indistinct] What you have said is true.

Encouraging cooperative societies, establishing a public employment fund with a specialized administration, [1-minute break in reception] and renewable energy, particularly solar energy, wind power, and solid materials. Brothers, when I was in Germany, I saw how solid materials were put to the best possible use.

— Protecting the environment and strategies of producing electrical power:

A memorandum of understanding was signed between the Palestinian Energy Authority and a joint venture including the U.S. (Delma) company and the French (E.D.F.) company, which has a Palestinian partner, to build a power generation station over two phases. Talks with the Swedish Government and other friendly governments are aimed at continuing to build three gas units with an overall capacity of 65 megawatts. Moreover, there is a plan to build transmission cables from the generation station to load centers. An agreement was reached to conduct a complete and thorough study on the construction of a transmission network in the West Bank. This study will be financed by the EU. This study, in which power distribution companies will be involved, will address the launch of joint grids and electrification projects in rural areas, among other things.

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The Palestinian Energy Authority has drawn up a plan to bring electric power to several villages. It submitted several projects to donor nations in this regard. We are optimistic that the Energy Authority will obtain the funds that will enable it to provide power to several villages, especially in the areas of Nabulus and Hebron. Additionally, Norway paid us $22-24 million to improve power transmission cables. We lose a great deal of electrical power because the cables are old and faulty.

— Ninth, awqaf and religious affairs:

Given the expansion of the territory under the control of the Palestinian National Authority, the Ministry of Awqaf is making preparations to establish new departments in the city of Tubas, Dura, Rafah, Dayr al-Balah, Gaza City, and elsewhere.

With regard to ministry employees, the ministry aims to appoint more employees in the course of its effort to fill current vacancies at awqaf departments and mosques.

Maintaining awqaf land and using it for investment purposes: Brothers, there are many encroachments on awqaf lands. Is this not so, Brother Abu-Ghassan? There are many encroachments on awqaf land. We have to account for all awqaf lands and real estate and erect buildings in appropriate city areas to resolve the housing problem and augment the revenues of the Awqaf Ministry and those of the [Palestinian] Authority, in cooperation with investors. Moreover, we will build four kindergartens in so and so governorates. We will build giant investment projects on awqaf land, invest in agricultural land, and improve the current lease of awqaf buildings in line with the expansion of the ministry's work. That is, brothers, Jerusalem [pauses]. Nearby, you have an awqaf land on which a building is leased for 10 pounds, which is an equivalent of $3, a year. Is this a reasonable rent? No it is not. We also must aim to maintain and rehabilitate mosques, religious scholars' monuments, and cemeteries. Moreover, we will cooperate with Palestinian and Arab institutions to launch housing projects, Islamic cultural centers, schools, and lecture halls.

Holy Koran societies and houses: The ministry will launch Holy Koran societies and houses throughout the homeland, because it is the responsibility of the ministry to safeguard religion and promote it. The Koran houses will be accorded due attention. Additionally, the ministry has two departments, one for brother Christians, and another for brother Jews, particularly Samaritans. There are other Jewish denominations, on which I do not wish to talk.

Preaching, Islamic guidance, zakat [alms giving], and pilgrimage. We acknowledge the fact that mistakes were made in the implementation of measures we took to ensure a smooth pilgrimage season. But, brothers, do not forget that our experience in this regard is new. I do not want to talk about what happened last year and this year in this regard. But, God willing, we will all cooperate to avert a repeat of such mistakes next year.

Documents, manuscripts, and libraries [as heard]

Tenth: In the field of telecommunications, post, and telephone:

The government will build 100 telephone exchanges with an initial capacity of 2,560 lines to be increased to 20,000 lines in Gaza City alone. Of course, my brothers, you know that our telecommunications company is a shareholding company open to all the Palestinian people. We offered shares for subscription. Banks, companies, and individuals have bought shares. So far, we collected $67 million for this Palestinian company. It is a private sector company, not a public sector. We did many things in Jabaliyah, Khan Yunus, and Dayr al-Balah. We also expanded the telephone exchanges in Nabulus, Ramallah, Qalqilyah, Janin, Jericho, Bethlehem, and Tulkarm. We linked all the exchanges of the West Bank with fiber optics cables as a prelude to linking the Gaza governorates and Gaza and Ramallah and Gaza and the West Bank governorates.

Proposed projects to establish and expand telephone networks: These will be discussed with you, but first will be discussed with the Palestinian national company whose name, I think, is Secelco. Is it Secelco? I think so.

We also have other industrial, economic, and trade activities in Nabulus, Janin, Bethlehem, Abu Dis, and Jericho. My brothers, you know that these were handled by your beloved brother Abu-'Ala [Ahmad Quray']. He used to run these three ministries. This is why I want here to praise his efforts not because he is the speaker of the Legislative Council but because he made financial and economic efforts with the PLO in Samid [PLO financial organization in Lebanon], Fatah, etc.

Out of our deep awareness of the economic situation — as a distorted and dependent economy — and our understanding of the nature of the [?inequitable] relations with all countries and with Israel in particular, the National Authority worked, through these concerned ministries, to specify the principles that governed their action and objectives during the past two years, through the following pivots:

With the Israeli side: We emphasized and sought recognition of all Palestinian rights in the economic, trade, and industrial fields, based on the Declaration of Principles agreement and the Paris economic protocol.

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We also sought to amend the clauses that should be amended and continue the transfer of powers in these areas from the Israeli side to the Palestinian side and to introduce a Palestinian customs book.

In the Arab field: The National Authority and the competent ministries realize the importance of Arab relations with the new Palestinian entity in all areas, especially in the area of trade and exchange of goods with Egypt and Jordan as part of an understanding to reach free trade with both countries. In this context, we have signed a trade agreement with Jordan, and we hope that another one will be signed shortly with Egypt, God willing.

There are intensive contacts with the Arab Gulf states to consider draft agreements to streamline economic and commercial relations with these sisterly states. Saudi Arabia's initiative to facilitate the entry of Palestinian products has come to add a new dimension to these excellent relations. Really, my brothers, Saudi Arabia has launched this initiative to facilitate the entry of all our products.

The Palestinian certificate of origin has been endorsed by all Arab countries. Exports to Arab countries began to take shape in a constant and continuous form, but we have a problem in transportation. God willing, we will overcome this problem after we open our airport and construct our port.

On the International Level: Within the framework of the tendencies of the Palestinian National Authority and the competent ministries, we tried to reach economic agreements that support our infant Palestinian economy. Within this framework, an agreement on free trade was reached recently with the United States. After this agreement is approved by the U.S. Congress, which we hope will take place within the next three months, it will be a qualitative shift for Palestinian exports.

Through the extensive contacts with the European Economic Community states and other European governments, the authority is trying to reach an agreement on free trade with this community. There are promising and positive signs concerning this subject. There are also contacts with a number of friendly countries to sign economic and commercial agreements. Within this context, final preparations are under way to sign a commercial agreement with Turkey. We are also arranging for workshops and studies on the economic situation in the Palestinian Authority's areas with the UN organizations and the concerned international organizations.

On the Domestic Front: The competent ministries are holding a series of meetings with all Palestinian production sectors in the West Bank and Gaza Strip with the aim of getting acquainted with the problems of these sectors and their needs in the stage of development. These meetings are also intended to help these industries work out policies, bases, and measures to support national production and improve it so that it will be in line with international standards in terms of quality and competitiveness, and to be able to offer the best products. Within this context, departments for standards and specifications, supervision and inspection, quality control, weighing and measurement, and price control were formed. Although these departments are in their initial stages, they are playing their role effectively.

Aware of the importance of the national industries, we are working hard to open new markets for the Palestinian products and to acquaint others with these products through participation in Arab and foreign trade fairs and in marketing seminars. We seek, in cooperation with some international establishments, to set up a national fund to support national exports. We also began a national dialogue on establishing an institute for Palestinian exports. It has been coordinated with the Palestinian chambers of commerce and industries to endorse the certificate of origin, as we said, in order to support our national exports.

In the Investment Fields: In view of the extraordinary importance of the investments and to encourage investments, the concerned ministries earlier began drafting the Palestinian investment law to regulate relations between foreign investors and concerned Palestinian establishments. This investment law also aims to encourage and regulate local investments and to maximize incentives and facilities for investors. In spite of the problems and complications the Israeli side sets, we have been able to issue more than 400 licenses for factories and investors.

We also have the industrial zones we spoke about in Janin, Tulkarm, Qalqiliyah, Nabulus, Bethlehem, Hebron, Ramallah, and three industrial zones in Gaza: Erez, Qarni, and Rafah.

Of course, brothers, there are problems and obstacles. Relations with the Israelis are unspecified and intertwined. The problems include closure, crossings, and the back-to-back [preceding phrase in English] policy. We should solve this problem with the Israeli side. The back-to-back policy increases the cost of everything. Hence, special emphasis should be placed on supporting the private sector and building the necessary establishments. The large deficit in the Palestinian trade balance should be offset through serious steps to develop the Palestinian exports and to increase national production through setting up the necessary establishments.

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Trade promotion and the Palestinian trade centers emanating from it in the countries that.... [pauses] Brothers, I want to remind you of something, we used to export Gaza's oranges and vegetables while we did not have a port. We used to bring these ships during the occupation days — have we forgotten. We used to bring these ships to take Gaza's oranges and vegetables. We can return to this and quickly export some of our agricultural products, like olive oil and oranges. We need to do this. We should restore the markets of the Soviet Union and East Europe.

Horizons of direct trade with the sisterly Arab and Islamic countries should be opened through drawing up agreements and boosting trade relations with the various world trade blocs, basically with the United States, the EU countries, Japan, and China. The free trade agreement should be finalized with the United States, especially since it was endorsed by the U.S. Congress.

All laws for facilitating and supporting trade activity should be finalized. All obstacles and burdens impeding trade activity and the Palestinian private sector should be removed. The West Bank and Gaza Strip constitute one political economic sector and one trade market. This means the freedom of movement of individuals. So, it is important to concentrate efforts on opening the safe corridor between the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The Palestinian customs regulations should be finalized. The Israeli side should be forced to adhere to the conditions and requirements of the customs union regarding the Palestinian side's rights, including direct trade with the Arab world, securing the transport of goods, and the freedom of import and export of all goods. The principle of free trade should be pursued in trade relations with the Israeli side in a manner that will secure the interests of both sides in a balanced way.

Twelve — [as heard] National Education: Within the framework of our national cultural plan based on strengthening the roots of our national identity in our homeland, Palestine, and within our strategic view.... [pauses] I want to say to you brothers that we should now speak about the financial status. Regrettably, there were some problems regarding paragraphing. Supposedly, after speaking about the economic aspect we should speak about the financial issues, the Finance Ministry, the Palestinian Monetary Fund, etc.

Within the framework of our national cultural plan based on strengthening the roots and national identity of our homeland, Palestine, and within our strategic view of the importance of our cultural battle in the present and future to build our Palestinian state, the Culture Ministry achieved a number of cultural projects on the local, Arab, and international levels in 1995.

On the local level, it conducted a comprehensive survey of the cultural establishments and societies. It bolstered its ties with intellectuals, writers, and artists through holding various seminars, conferences, and festivals. It contributed to activating the cultural and artistic movement in the homeland. It extended various forms of support to this movement. Accordingly, it worked out the necessary cultural regulations for the various cultural activities. It concluded a host of cultural cooperation agreements with sisterly Arab countries and friendly foreign countries. Under these agreements, artistic and cultural cadres from various specialities were trained and art festivals were held inside and outside of Palestine. Furthermore, artistic groups and specialized delegations were dispatched abroad.

The ministry also contributed to setting up 72 cultural centers in various cities, villages, and camps. The ministry is also concerned about funding the composition and publication of significant books and a specialized cultural newspaper on a monthly basis — brothers, there is still much to be done, we are doing our best. The ministry also purchases local books, newsletters, and magazines and distributes them for free to the cultural centers. The ministry also bought and restored some of the old buildings that became cultural centers frequented by citizens. We will also set up some museums in cooperation with the national government institutes. We will also support the public libraries, crafts, and industries upon the recommendations of the UNESCO and the international antiquities societies.

The competent ministries will pay special attention to the antiquities, given that these antiquities are an important cultural legacy. The Legislative Council formed a committee on education, culture, antiquities, and information. This will help increase national interest in maintaining our history and memory and entrenching our national identity. Based on this, we will continue our activities and plans in this regard to preserve our antiquities and prepare them to become active in the general cultural structure of Palestine. We will seek to complete our work in the area of infrastructure restoration. We will set up a music institute, national library, national theater, show rooms, halls, new cultural centers; we will pursue other activities in this domain.

As far as information, television, and radio are concerned, I am not going to say much, because you already discussed these issues in detail. Upgrading and qualifying the cadres [pauses] We should say one thing Mr. Marwan [not further identified], one and a half years ago, we had a video [preceding word in English], now

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we have a television corporation and radio station that managed to cover the Arab area and compete with other broadcasting stations in the Arab arena. It has a big audience. That is all about the television and radio.

In the realm of tourism and antiquities, the PNA in general attaches special importance to the tourism sector, in its capacity as a productive sector that plays an active role in supporting our independent national economy. Brothers, despite its small area, our country is the most important destination in terms of culture, heritage, religion, and human value. This is the Palestinian homeland.

Therefore, we should pay attention to tourism, because it is a source of income to us and will provide further work opportunities. The Culture Ministry has created something called tourism. However, we cannot say that we reached perfection. By the year 2000, we will celebrate the birthday of Jesus, peace be upon him — the Palestinian prophet; there is a prophet from the Arabian Peninsula, one from Egypt, and this prophet is from Palestine, specifically from Bethlehem. So, we should prepare for this event. There is room for investments. The ministry and the private sector are working to set up hotels and transport facilities for tourists. I regret to say that so far the tourists come via non-Palestinian means of transport and stay in non-Palestinian places; this is a loss. So, investment should be encouraged in the tourism sector, including building of hotels. Our identity should be affixed on the tourism map. The Palestinian identity should be affixed on the international tourism map. We should actively participate in the various regional and international organizations. We are doing our best, however, we cannot reach some of these organizations. We should attend tourism conferences, seminars, and exhibitions and boost bilateral relations with the various countries and conclude tourism agreements. There should be a comprehensive tourism planning based on sustainable development.

I spoke about the year 2000, tourism promotion, and professional training, which is necessary. Besides Bethlehem University, we want to have schools or intermediate institutes specialized in professional training.

Four—Waters:

The PNA took part in drawing up the Oslo agreement on waters and will continue to implement what was agreed upon in [words indistinct].

Bilateral meetings between Palestine and Israel will continue through joint committees. Much work has been achieved with respect to this agreement. However, much remains to be done regarding this agreement which touches on a vital issue. Regarding underground waters, we have the largest underground water reservoir under Bethlehem and Hebron. Regrettably, this reservoir is usurped. There are other water reservoirs in Janin and in the area between Tulkarm and Nabulus, not to mention the Jordan River.

We share with the littoral states of the Jordan River both at the source and the mouth of the river, through the [Palestinian] Golan.

We will continue drilling wells and we expect that water will increase in Ramallah to reach 500,000 cubic meters a year. You are going to read all these things in detail. We have a problem with collecting water prices from the municipal and rural councils. The dues amount to 21 million shekels.

As for the bilateral projects, I want you to read them all. As for the international projects, there are $20 million for international projects in Gaza and $20 million for projects in the West Bank.

As for cooperation among the authority's bodies, the National Authority enhances full cooperation among all ministries in this vital and important sector for the Palestinian people. [sentence as heard] We should then work out technical studies.

15th — The Regional Cooperation Field:

As for the multilateral negotiations and the Economic Working Group—you know the multilateral talks include the refugees, the economy, etc., including the regional Egyptian, Jordanian, Israeli, and Palestinian cooperation. This cooperation deals with roads, gas, electricity, railways, and water. There are details about the northern, coastal, and eastern crossings that link Jordan and Egypt, Egypt and Israel, and Syria and Lebanon in accordance with the multilateral and bilateral agreements.

The Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Construction, PECDAR: It was formed in 1993 by a decision adopted by the chairman of the PLO Executive Committee. The council works within the framework set for it in the fields of development and reconstruction through the following considerations. PECDAR was the responsibility of my brother Abu-al-Lutf [Faruq Qaddumi] and my brother Abu-'Ala' [Ahmad Quray']. Of course, you took Abu-'Ala' from us, may God forgive you. I do not speak nonsense, Abu-'Ala' was the one in charge of PECDAR on the ground. We worked out certain considerations and we left it for PECDAR to implement the program it is implementing on eliminating the bottlenecks which the Palestinian infrastructure is facing. All these things necessitate providing the suitable

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atmosphere for the private sector. [words indistinct] require establishments. [words indistinct] 122 employees, including 57 engineers to define this system with the concerted parties and the international and local quarters.

The future concept calls for supporting and developing this system to be in line with the developing capabilities of the ministries and municipalities in order to join efforts and strengthen coordination and dialogue, and then guarantee the use of the available resources in a wise manner that results in maximum economic revenues for the citizens.

The council has remarks on the authority's activities concerning the importance of coordination between the ministries and the importance of coordination between the Palestinian establishments and facilitates the work in order to cope with urgent national needs.

Therefore, the Council of Ministers will coordinate the plans and projects of the ministries and reduce their ambitious competition on the limited resources. It will also lay down solid foundations and draw up clear policies to increase assistance and make use of them through channeling funds according to the national and developmental plans. So, our future trend is to develop the present assistance coordination system. Gradually, this system should become a Palestinian one that will crystallize the decision-making policy in the nascent Palestinian state, God willing.

We will also seek to ensure that the donor nations will have an active and constructive participation in this system and in a manner that will embody the spirit of profound understanding, bring the interests closer, and unite goals. We will also seek to mobilize the Palestinian energies and urge the competent agencies to develop the regulations according to our own concepts.

Then, there are the relief programs; there is the Prompt Relief Program, PRP 1 and PRP 2 [preceding acronyms in English] for building roads and sewage system, and Prompt Relief Program for the Ministries of Health and Education — these programs deal with the funds that were channeled to PECDAR [Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction]. As for the Prompt Relief Program for the Ministries of Health and Education, $12 million will go to the Education Ministry and $8 million to the Health Ministry.

There is also the Technical Assistance Program, TAT [preceding acronym in English], which amounted to $23 million. The Norwegian grant was wholly earmarked for building a school in the West Bank — so far $2.5 million were spent on the construction work. There is also a $12-million worth municipal assistance program from the EEC; $18 million will be extended in the second phase. Some $40 million dollars will be extended by the World Bank within the first stage of the municipal assistance program. The OPEC grant program amounts to $3 million.

According to the latest amendment on 19 January 1996, Holst Fund grant amounted to $215 million, earmarked for various categories, most importantly the PNA's salaries to which $133 million were allocated. This program includes a total sum of $10 million for cleanliness in Gaza. A sum of $15.5 million were allocated for creating job opportunities equally in Gaza and the West Bank. When I was in Washington, I signed with the World Bank a $20-million agreement on labor. Further $20 million will be added to this sum bringing the total to $40 million — in fact, I did not sign this agreement, I supervised the singing. Dr. Sa'ib 'Urayqat did, I do not want him to be angry with me. The World Bank transferred a total of $160 million. The bank is still studying the transfer of the remaining amount. Here is a table, which you can see later, on the breakdown of these funds.

In the field of public works, the plan of the Public Works Ministry for the coming years covers all Palestinian areas. This is the plan of the Public Works Ministry and the PNA, the government. The ministry's responsibility is to design and implement construction projects. The picture is shining here, but it is not so shining. May God help us. There are too many projects for roads, sewage, and many things. You see that.

Eighteenth, in the field of security and the Interior Ministry: This is the first time we have had an Interior Ministry, just as this is the first time we have had Ministries of Awqaf, Information, and Culture. The concern of the Interior Ministry is to provide swift service to our people and to prepare documents in a record time.

We established many departments in the ministry and laid down a working mechanism for the ministry. There are many mistakes, brothers. Nobody says there are no mistakes. However, there are many positive things, as well. We must cooperate together to reduce the many mistakes and to increase the positive things. Today, we have a Palestinian passport, but there is a problem in this regard. Because of the closure of the area between Gaza and the West Bank, I gave immediate instructions to set up an office in the West Bank so that the distribution of Palestinian passports, identity cards, and documents will not be obstructed.

We have an ongoing development plan, brothers. We will construct buildings. We will issue Palestinian identity cards with accredited Palestinian national numbers

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during this year. We will use computers in government departments and start a printing house to print Palestinian documents. There are many problems as you know.

All national security forces, police, and security departments are always ready to carry out their tasks to safeguard security and discipline and enforce law. The police force and security departments are working to enhance the standard of their cadres and to train them abroad.

Brothers, we had nothing. We are aware of this. We seek the help of our brothers and friends in the world. Brothers, we still do not have fingerprinting equipment. We must be aware of this so that we may recognize our problems. Our problems are numerous. We have so many problems of which we are unaware. Israel has devices that can detect the smell of contents of suitcases. It obtained this from the United States. As though security... [pauses] here I blame the U.S. Administration. Does this mean that the National Authority is not in need of security, does not need sophisticated equipment? It is true that they made pledges during my last visit, but I hope the pledges will be implemented.

The latest [suicide] operations forced us to take security measures to protect the national security and the supreme national interest. These security measures were accompanied by certain violations and mistakes because of our new experience in this regard. Admitting mistakes is a virtue.

[Unidentified speaker] Who admits rights, corrects [word indistinct]?

['Arafat continues] Do you follow me? In light of the revision of security measures ... ['Arafat pauses to reply to the speaker] it is true that he rights the wrongs but as long as he admits wrongs then he will right them.

[Unidentified speaker] But he does not admit wrong.

['Arafat] No, he does not, but we admit our wrongs, my brothers. In light of the revision of security measures, strict instructions have been issued for faithful adherence to the provisions of the law and ending all violations of citizens' rights. ['Arafat addresses Council Member Hanan 'Ashrawi] I say citizen's rights because I do not want you, Hanan, to be displeased, [laughing] the subject you [word indistinct] for those who erred and transgressed against the law. Yet, the Palestinian people are magnanimous.

[Unidentified speaker] [words indistinct]

['Arafat] It is just as I have said, you must understand the import of the words.

['Arafat continues with statement] The president has asked the public prosecutor to study the local problems referred to the government by the Legislative Council and release every detainee who is not convicted of any action that harms our national interest and security. The government would like to assure the Legislative Council that it has ordered the release of students who were detained in recent events to enable them to appear for their final examinations despite problems this will cause [applause].

The government's policy in the security field is based on implementing the letter and spirit of the law and putting an end to violations by all side—by all sides. The government will not be lenient with anyone, whether a minister or a messenger boy, who commits excesses or violates the law.

Our political system is a democratic one based on multiplicity and respect for the views of others without violating national security and law and order. The freedom of opinion is guaranteed by law. The law also protects the national security and interests from tampering which exposes our national security to danger. It is the prerogative of the Legislative Council to supervise the work of the executive power and to bring it to account in accordance with these prerogatives. Through the complementary relationship between the legislative and executive powers, the government will always be prepared to pursue all those who violate the law, whether in the government, the national security, the police, or any other.

Can I be more frank?

The strength of the PNA primarily and basically depends on the people's confidence in its decisions, agencies, and practices on the ground with respect to citizens' interests and freedoms that are guaranteed by law. Any damage to this confidence will be harmful to our national cause as we enter the most difficult phase of negotiations to complete our national independence in our independent state with holy Jerusalem as its capital.

In the financial field, the Israeli occupation authorities' policy and practices in the occupied Palestinian territories led to structural deformities and imbalances in the economic and social structure. They turned the Palestinian economy into a satellite of the Israeli economy. The Israeli authorities adopted a large number of measures and policies aimed to seize the largest number of domestic economic resources and to attract cheap labor. Those policies had negative effects on the years of investment and production in the Israeli economy [sentence as heard]. The Israeli financial and monetary policies, generally speaking, sought to address the problems of the Israeli economy without taking into consideration their effects on the economy of the occupied

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Palestinian territories. Israel continues to exercise such policies even after the signing of the Oslo I and Oslo II agreements.

Despite our reservations about the restrictions imposed by the economic protocol concluded with Israel, the PNA, according to some provisions in this protocol, can take care of the financial and monetary policies agreed upon in the fields of the monetary authority, direct and indirect taxes, the insurance sector, the agricultural and industrial production management policies, and developing the tourist sector. There is no such thing as A, B, C areas in this regard. The question of A, B, C divisions was supposed to have ended after the first three months. With the final status negotiations, we are supposed to finish all these things, God willing.

Income and Expenditure: Statistics indicate that total consumption exceeded the gross national product by a rate of 10-23 percent from 1987-93. The capital formation in the Palestinian territories has been limited because of the occupation authorities' economic policies obstructing the growth of investments, especially in the production sector. They imposed a customs siege on the Palestinian economy in terms of customs tariffs and levying the same direct and indirect taxes imposed in Israel. The rate of capital formation compared to the gross national product for the years 1989- 93 ranged from 34-39 percent. Its growth rates were characterized by excessive fluctuations during the same period. The previous capital formation structure shows a decline in the rate of public investments. They did not exceed an average of 10 percent. Meanwhile, the private sector played a major role in the bulk of the flow of investment, especially in the field of construction and importation of machines and equipment. The absence of a banking system and credit facilities played an extremely important role in defining the pattern of Palestinian capital formation.

Let us speak frankly, brothers. There was a mistake [indistinct words]. For the period from mid-1994 up to now, the slow flow of international aid, especially the failure to finance the infrastructure rehabilitation programs and to encourage private investment, negatively affected the flow of private investments. However, some encouraging signs have begun to appear by the private sector's move to establish private investment projects, though not at the aspired level.

The closure of the West Bank and Gaza over the past three months has caused great harm to the Palestinian economy. Statistics show that the West Bank and Gaza were closed 17 times since the PNA was established and for a total period of almost 375 days. Losses resulting from the closure are estimated at $5.5 to $6 billion.

Overall production in March 1996 dropped by 35-50 percent and is expected to drop by 45-60 percent during April. Unemployment rose to 65 percent of the work force. It is certain that the closure will have a harmful effect in the long run on investment and economic development and on the financial resources available to the PNA.

The financial policy which the PNA pursued since its assumption of power, had the following aims:

A. Stressing the principle of accountability.

Let me consider this thing slowly. When we first came, if you follow me, we adopted [pauses] what term did we use for this in English?

[Unidentified speaker] Accountability.

['Arafat] Accountability, transparity [meaning transparancy], and tranquility [last three words in English] also if you like, for good measure.

['Arafat continues with the statement] Stressing the principle of accountability in all financial transactions and documenting all spendings. This won the PNA the appreciation of the international financial institutions, led by the World Bank, the IMF, and some donor states. Some of the donor states decided to deal with us directly without the World Bank or any other bank.

B. Implementing recommendations issued by the missions of the World Bank, the IMF, and some international experts in administering various types of revenues and improving performance in this field. Qualifying employees on all levels. We are not ashamed to say that we have unqualified employees. We say that we should train them on all levels to shoulder their responsibilities, and remain alert and efficient in carrying out the policy of public spending.

C. Stressing the reduction of the budget deficit in accordance with the international tendency toward reducing the deficit especially since the donor states insist that we must take care of revenues and spending so that the international aid should be devoted to capital spending and financial infrastructure projects.

This is a very important point, brothers. They tell us: You must provide for the spending of your state and we will spend only on projects.

An improvement in performance occurred in 1995. Revenues reached $425 million and spending reached $525 million. Therefore, the budget deficit for 1995 was reduced from an estimated $227 to only $100 million.

Of course, in 1996, there was a setback during the first four or five months, which we are still experiencing.

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because of the economic closure disaster. You know all of this. Expenditure during the first quarter of 1996 amounted to $176 million and revenues reached $152 million; that is, a deficit of $24 million during the first quarter. This is the deficit.

The 1996 budget was prepared before the end of 1995. So that you may not hold us to account. [Addressing speaker Ahmad Quray'] Do not take this point against us, Abu-'Ala'. We prepared the budget in 1995 and you took part in this preparation. Expenditures are put at $629 million and the revenues are estimated at $554 million. The deficit is supposed to be $75 million. Let us pray that the deficit will be only this much. This is because our expectations now are $647 million in spendings, our revenues $475 million, and the deficit is $182 million. This is our estimate.

Foreign financing is inevitable. We must face the financial crisis in order to ensure financial stability and explore prospects of development, reach a rational financial policy, encourage national savings, and accelerate preparations to establish a housing bank to face the requirements of housing, because our slogan is a house for every citizen.

D. Encouraging commercial banks based on free market economy in order to contribute to financial housing projects and provide money for investments in general.

E. Working to confine the domestic and foreign government loans within the clearest limits possible and adopting measures to ensure all the PNA's revenues.

F. Establishing an effective financial and banking system.

G. Cooperating with the technical teams in the World Bank and the IMF to have a credit policy that is suitable to our economic circumstances.

In the field of transport and communications. The Transport and Communications Ministry (?developed) like the other PNA ministries. The services sector was neglected, consisting of mainly of simple traffic departments. Thus, the PNA had to deal with a legacy which needed development to carry out great tasks. The first step was to transform the traffic departments into sections in the Palestinian Ministry of Transport and Communications. Various departments and administrations were created in various fields such as traffic, aviation, meteorology, ports, and roads.

In the field of Youths and sports:

The PNA, and I am addressing 'Azmi ['Azmi al-Khawaja, council member] who exerted great effort in this regard. The PNA gave special attention to the youth sector because it constitutes the majority of the Palestinian people who are the motivating force of national struggle for freedom and independence. They made the greatest sacrifices in terms of martyrs, detainees, deportees, and the handicapped, and were exposed to organized Israeli repression and closures — and you are aware of this.

The task of incorporating the Palestinian youths into a civilized society capable of enhancing and releasing the Palestinian people's and youths' potentials and creativeness during the stage of construction and independence is aimed at strengthening the spirit of national affiliation of the youths, developing self-reliance, emphasizing self-confidence, promoting collective and voluntary work, and stressing the concepts of democracy and social justice. In particular, special emphasis was given to girls and young women. Where is Shaykh Yaghi [Council Member]?

[Unidentified speaker] He went to pray.

['Arafat] I will also go for prayers. It is too early for prayers. The afternoon prayer is scheduled for 1615.

Prophet Muhammad said: Learn half of our religion from this red- haired woman [the prophet's wife, 'A'ishah]. How did they know that she had red hair. This is a prophet's saying.

[Unidentified speaker] [words indistinct]

['Arafat] How did they know that she had red hair? This means that they could see her hair. I am discussing subjects ranging from sports and youths to security, religion, and even our brothers the Samaritans, and I am proud that I have studied the Koran, the Bible, and the Torah. I am proud of this.

Regarding laws and legislations, the Ministry reorganized and rebuilt sports bodies and establishments and drew up a legal framework which ensures the practice of ... [pauses] I say this because thee was a black period when youths were prevented from going to the beach, being tourists, or playing games. This reorganization will include infrastructure, maternity and child care, and care for the handicapped. I am very happy that I am the chairman of the Handicapped Youth Club which participated in the Olympic games.

The Palestinian youths in the Diaspora are deprived of these things. In Lebanon for instance, nobody would receive medical care without the help of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society. The youths there are deprived of everything other youths enjoy. International youth cooperation is also stressed.

The Civil Service Commission [CSC]:

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In any state, the CSC takes care of the affairs of the employees and their administration. The CSC has been the subject of criticism by the ministries. [laughter]

[Unidentified speaker] What is the solution?

['Arafat] The solution is to institutionalize the state.

In order to ensure the unity of the homeland, a draft law on civil service in the West Bank and Gaza has been prepared. A full structure for each ministry has been drawn up along with a national work plan and strategic scheme to organize and create job opportunities.

I have forgotten to mention in my discussion of youth and sports that we have the Palestinian Olympic Commission and we are proud that it participated in Olympiads, sometimes as an observer and sometimes as full member.

The Administrative Monitoring Commission:

In view of its great importance, the commission has been formed and a special law will be enacted to give it powers for direct supervision of over all the PNA's departments with the exception of the Judiciary in order to realize its aims of developing the sense of responsibility of the employees, improve their performance, take to task those who fail, and make them committed to the principle of transparency. One of the commission's tasks is to monitor spending of all PNA departments, rationalize government spending, discover administrative mistakes as soon as possible to avoid bureaucracy and red tape, look into peoples complaints, and submit periodic reports to the head of the state.

Supply.

Over many years, the occupation linked the West Bank and Gaza economy with its own economy, fully merging commodities in the market, taking into account its own interests and neglecting our people's interests. The occupation exploited disparity in the per capita income by marketing its low quality, obsolete products. Yes my brothers, they marketed rubbish to us which was not fit for consumption. The occupation tried in vain to link the West Bank and Gaza economies with its own. It blocked Palestinian products and tried to prevent improvement of the Palestinian economy; it worked to keep the West Bank as a local market for its products, imports, and work force. In short, the occupation refused to allow us to have a supply policy that protects the citizen and the commodity in terms of quantity, quality, and cost.

After the Oslo-1 and Oslo-2 agreements and the Israeli withdrawal from the populated centers and territories, the PNA received this heavy legacy. Therefore, it became aware of the need to deal with supplies as a national policy. It established the Supply Department in 1995. However, objective and subjective circumstances forced us to devote a ministerial portfolio for supply because of its importance in protecting the citizen and the country's future. National independence is necessary and this independence is subject to economic independence. This can be realized through a clear supply policy that preserves the citizens' mainstay, the bread of the citizens who have had enough ordeals over many years.

This Ministry does not have a magic wand but it will be a modest beginning to end monopoly in the market and tampering with the commodity prices, making them available to the people at reasonable and acceptable prices. The work of this ministry was fragmented by the occupation and dispersed among more than one ministry and department; we will work for restructuring it. Its departments must be rebuilt.

Brother Speaker of the Palestinian Legislative Council, members of the council: The national, political, economic, social, and security tasks of the government cannot be accomplished without creative cooperation between the legislative and executive powers and our people's support and participation. The building of the homeland cannot be done without the work of the citizens. Let us roll up our sleeves to build the Palestinian homeland. This is the responsibility of all Palestinians everywhere. The independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital is a stone's throw away. Only the people of Palestine will take upon themselves the task of building the homeland after shouldering the mission of the revolution and the intifadah until we established the PNA and began the march of work and construction.

I call on your legislative council to discuss the government's policy statement fully and in detail so that the government will begin implementing this program and so that it will receive the support and confidence of our Legislative Council in every step that it takes for construction in the service of our people, the homeland, and the Arab nation.

May God's peace and blessings be upon you. And say: Work righteousness: Soon will God observe your work, and His apostle and the believers. [Koran verse]

Palestinian Affairs: Hamas Source Says Attacks Against Israel To Stop

TA2305191196 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1900 GMT 23 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] A Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] source in Gaza says that Shaykh Ahmad Yasin has called on his supporters to stop the attacks

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against Israel until the end of the permanent arrangement talks between Israel and the Palestinians. The source said this is Hamas' new position as well as Shaykh Yasin's. Our correspondent Yoni Ben-Menahem notes that two Hamas leaders in Gaza met Shaykh Yasin in his prison and discussed with him the issuing of a call to all Hamas members to stop the attacks in the next few days.

Palestinian Affairs: Official on Visit to Shaykh Yasin, Prisoners Issue

JN2405163096 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 1145 GMT 24 May 96

[From the "Today's Events" program]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] A Palestinian delegation visited Shaykh Ahmad Yasin in prison, and some Israeli newspapers carried rumors following the visit. They said that the delegation discussed the possibility of a temporary halt to military operations. Hisham 'Abd-al-Raziq, member of the delegation and official in charge of the prisoners file, talked about the visit and the situation of the prisoners in the jails of the Israeli occupation.

[Begin 'Abd-al-Raziq recording] We paid a visit to Shaykh Ahmad Yasin. I and two other brothers from Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] leadership participated in the visit, which took place at the initiative of Hamas for consultations. Hamas had requested the Palestinian Authority [PA] to visit. The visit was not aimed at all at raising the issue of a temporary halt to Hamas' military operations until after the [Israeli] elections. Statements carried by Israeli radio were completely baseless. The brothers discussed with Shaykh Yasin ways to reach an agreement with the PA and to work as a political party that will maintain its opposition in a democratic way within the Palestinian political map.

Shaykh Ahmad Yasin reaffirmed his previous position that he wants Hamas to pursue its policy by avoiding military action and to carry out its national duty to build the homeland to ensure the development of the Palestinian society and the continuation of the Palestinian national cohesion, avoiding internecine Palestinian violence, which will destroy the Palestinian people if it continues. He believes that the PA is the authority of all Palestinians, who should work under its unified leadership. This is the attitude of Shaykh Ahmad Yasin, who blessed the positions of the brothers in Hamas and encouraged them to work for that purpose.

The statements, which Israeli newspapers and media organs attributed to some Israeli security officials, were an attempt by some Israeli extremists to exploit the visit for purely electoral purposes. [passage omitted]

The Palestinian and Israeli justice ministers met last week and discussed the prisoners issue, which will be a major topic on the agenda of the committees of the final-status negotiations. I hope we will be able to close this file by gaining the release of all our prisoners. Following the elections and the formation of a new Israeli Government, the final-status negotiations will start. We hope we will close the prisoners file during these negotiations in accordance with the agreement. [end recording]

Palestinian Affairs: Hamas Leaflet Rejects Shaykh Yasin Call To Stop Terror

TA2405173596 Jerusalem Channel 2 Television Network in Hebrew 1700 GMT 24 May 96

[Announcer-read report]

[FBIS Translated Text] Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] is not accepting Shaykh Ahmad Yasin's call to stop terror attacks against Israel. In a leaflet distributed in Gaza today, Hamas calls for a continuation of a jihad struggle against Israel. Our correspondent Sulayman al-Shafi reports that the leaflet says that as long as the shaykh is being held in an Israeli prison, he is not free to express his opinion — which is why Hamas need not comply with his call.

Palestinian Affairs: Sources Deride Reports That 'Abbas Is 'Arafat's 'Deputy'

MM2405143896 London AL-HAYAH in Arabic 24 May 96 p 5

[Unattributed report: "Abu-Mazin Is Not 'Arafat's Deputy"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Gaza, AL-HAYAH — Informed Palestinian sources derided press reports that the appointment of Mahmud 'Abbas (Abu-Mazin) as the PLO Executive Committee's secretary to succeed Jamal al-Surani indicates that he is 'Arafat's deputy or successor.

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Ahmad 'Abd-al-Rahman, the Palestinian Council of Ministers secretary, told AL-HAYAH in Gaza yesterday that this interpretation is unfounded "because whoever holds the secretary's post does not necessarily become the president's deputy." Jamal al-Surani had held this post, but because of his absence from the new Executive Committee, Abu-Mazin was given the job.

It should be mentioned that the post of secretary exists in all Palestinian representative institutions as in the case of the Fatah Central Committee secretary, the Revolutionary Committee, the Palestine National Council, the Legislative Council, and the Palestinian Council of Ministers. This is normally an administrative post.

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Algeria

Algeria: Government Condemns 'Barbaric' Murder of Monks

LD2505133596 Paris France-Inter Radio Network in French 1300 GMT 25 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] This afternoon the Algerian Government has given its first reaction to the murder of the seven French monks but has not confirmed the report.

In a statement reported by the Algerian press agency, the Algerian interior minister says that the government still has no element of confirmation but adds that if the report were to be confirmed, it could only evoke indignation, repulsion, and condemnation in Algeria and would fit in with the bloody and barbaric logic of these criminal groups who have no respect for human life.

The Algerian minister goes on to recall that his government has spared no effort to find the French monks safe and sound.

Algeria: FIS Official Denounces Killing of French Monks

JN2505142496 Paris Radio Monte Carlo in Arabic 1100 GMT 25 May 96

[Interview with Ouldeddah, member of the Algerian FIS Executive Committee abroad, by Kamal Tarabayh; place and date not given — recorded]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Ouldeddah] The Algerian Islamic Salvation Front [FIS] strongly denounces the criminal act that targeted the seven clergymen. The FIS considers this action a violation of the principles of our tolerant Islam. I stress, once again, the FIS principled positions which primarily reject all actions against civilians and innocent people.

[Tarabayh] Will the FIS take practical steps to prevent the recurrence of such painful and unhappy incidents?

[Ouldeddah] As you know, the FIS is prohibited by law. Military action emerged in Algeria after the authorities confiscated the people's free choice and dissolved the FIS. We are certain that the FIS can play a major role to stop the bloodshed in Algeria and to restore peace on the condition that the FIS historic leadership is released from jail and given its legitimate right to participate in political life.

[Tarabayh] How do you react to the French authorities' call on all French citizens to leave Algeria?

[Ouldeddah] In fact, this is a wise position. The situation in Algeria is not satisfactory. I wonder why the Algerian authority is maintaining a complete silence four days after the murder of the seven clergymen. What surprises us is this terrible silence by the Algerian authority despite the fact that four days have passed now since the incident. This in fact raises many questions.

[Tarabayh] Thank you, Mr. Ouleddah

[Ouldeddah] God bless you.

Algeria: Suspected Islamists Blow Up Railroad Track, Derail Train

LD2705140196 Paris Radio France International in French 1230 GMT 27 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The Algerian daily newspaper LE MATIN reported that suspected Islamists blew up a railroad track in the northeast of the country, causing the derailment of a freight train. Fortunately, no victims were reported.

Egypt

Egypt: Al-Qadhdafi Arrives in al-Sallum

NC2405113596 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1115 GMT 24 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Al-Sallum, 24 May (MENA)—Colonel Mu'ammar al-Qadhdafi, leader of the Libyan revolution, arrived in al-Sallum this afternoon accompanied by officials. Col. al-Qadhdhafi was met upon arrival by Information Minister Safwat al-Sharif. Col. al-Qadhdhafi is expected to spend the day in Marsa Matruh.

Egypt: Al-Qadhdhafi Arrives in Cairo, Meets With Mubarak

NC2505122396 Cairo Arab Republic of Egypt Radio Network in Arabic 1130 GMT 25 May 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] President Husni Mubarak and Colonel Mu'ammar al-Qadhdhafi held a round of talks following Col. al-Qadhdhafi's arrival in Cairo this morning.

Information Minister Safwat al-Sharif stated that the two leaders discussed issues concerning foreign policy and bilateral ties — most importantly: the situation in the Middle East, inter-Arab relations, developments in the Arab arena, and coordination on Arab issues in general. He added that the talks also touched on all matters outstanding between Libya and the United States. He noted that the two leaders discussed bilateral ties in the economic, investment and other domains; cooperation on a large number of projects; and assessment of the work conducted by committees from the two countries, including cooperation in electric and railway projects. Al-Sharif added that the two leaders plan to continue

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their discussion of these topics at an evening round of talks.

Our brother Col. al-Qadhdhafi left Marsa Matruh early this morning for Cairo. He stopped for a few hours at the Wahat 'Umar area [not further specified]. He was given an official welcome upon arrival at al-Qubbah Palace in Cairo, where President Husni Mubarak was on hand to receive him. [passage omitted]

Egypt: Al-Qadhdhafi Addresses Egyptian Bedouin Leaders

NC2505100396 Paris AFP in English 0910 GMT 25 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Cairo, May 25 (AFP) — Libyan leader Mu'ammar al-Qadhdhafi and Egyptian President Husni Mubarak were to hold talks Saturday [25 May] on a suspected chemical weapons factory being built by Tripoli and its continuing international isolation over the Lockerbie bombing.

Al-Qadhdhafi who crossed the border into Egypt on Friday, spent the night in a caravan camper in the desert between the Mediterranean coastal city of Alexandria and Cairo for "security reasons," Libyan sources said.

The two leaders will later meet in Cairo to discuss "matters raised against Libya by the West, particularly American claims that Libya is building a chemical weapons plant," the Egyptian government daily AL-AHRAM said.

They will also deal with "suggestions to solve the Lockerbie crisis" in which Tripoli is accused of harboring the two Libyan authors of the 1988 bombing of an American airliner over Lockerbie, Scotland, leaving 270 dead.

Libya has been under an air embargo since 1992 for refusing to hand over the two suspects.

The talks will also cover bilateral relations, including construction of a railway line between the two countries and "an oil pipeline from Libya to Alexandria," the daily AL-AKHBAR said.

Al-Qadhdhafi arrived in a white Cadillac Friday in the Egyptian resort of Marsa Matruh, 200 kilometers (120 miles) from the border, kicking off his visit of several days.

"Mubarak will support Libya in its position because he is certain there are no chemical weapons plants in Libya," al-Qadhdhafi told a public rally in Matruh in which he met with leaders of Bedouin tribes in the region.

"Libya is threatened by American attacks aimed at destroying its development," he said.

Al-Qadhdhafi said the plant under construction at Tarhunah, 80 kilometers (50 miles) south of Tripoli, "is for building irrigation pipes."

Washington has threatened military action against the plant, which it says will be the world's biggest chemical weapons factory, if diplomacy fails to stop its construction.

Al-Qadhdhafi claimed that Washington had used photos of the plant "taken by Egyptian journalists and claimed they were satellite photos" of a chemical facility.

He also offered to "burden all the costs of building a canal from the Nile river to Marsa Matruh to provide water to the Western Desert."

The Libyan leader said the issue of water "was the main reason for the failure of Syria and Israel to reach agreement" on a peace settlement.

"Israel wants to keep all the water sources on the Golan Heights" occupied by the Jewish state in 1967, "while Syria refuses. If not for this obstacle, they would have reached an accord," he told the crowds.

The Bedouin leaders, meanwhile, called on al-Qadhdhafi not to resume a threatened expulsion of Palestinians working in Libya, urging Libya "to help the Palestinians have a prosperous life."

Al-Qadhdhafi ordered the expulsion of thousands of Palestinains last fall before bending to Arab protests and agreeing to stop the campaign for a grace period of six months, which ran out in May.

Travellers crossing from Libya into Egypt have said Tripoli has once again been gathering Palestinians in preparation for resuming the expulsions, which al-Qadhdhafi said aim to "return the Palestinians home" to the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Egypt: Al-Qadhdhafi Meets University Officials, Students

NC2705145396 Cairo Arab Republic of Egypt Radio Network in Arabic 1400 GMT 27 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Libyan Revolution leader Brother Colonel Mu'ammar al-Qadhdhafi stressed that President Husni Mubarak has conscientiously led the rebuilding of Egypt and is working to serve Arab interests. He praised the building and economic boom in Egypt under President Mubarak.

Col. al-Qadhdhafi made these remarks during his meeting with presidents and deans of Egyptian universities and colleges and chairmen of Cairo University's students unions, a meeting which was held at Ahmad Lutfi

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al-Sayyid Hall at Cairo University. The meeting was attended by Education Minister Dr. Kamil Husayn Baha'-al-Din; Dr. Usamah al-Baz, first Foreign Ministry under secretary and director of the president's office for political affairs; and members of the Libyan delegation accompanying the brother colonel.

Col. Mu'ammar al-Qadhdhafi stressed that Arab unity has become necessary. He noted that he and President Mubarak fully agree on all issues regarding integration between the two countries and have given the green light for proceeding toward this objective. He said there are joint projects between the two countries.

Cairo University President Dr. Mufid Shihab welcomed Col. al-Qadhdhafi on behalf of the university, stressing that al-Qadhdhafi's visit to the university as an Arab leader constitutes recognition of the university's role in the contemporary renaissance.

Egypt: Mubarak, al-Qadhdhafi Complete Summit Discussions

NC2705202996 Cairo Arab Republic of Egypt Radio Network in Arabic 2000 GMT 27 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] President Husni Mubarak and Libyan revolution leader brother Colonel Mu'ammar al-Qadhdhafi held a meeting at the Presidential Palace in al-Qubbah this evening. During the meeting, they completed their discussions of the issues on the agenda of the Egyptian-Libyan summit. The talks also dealt with bilateral relations, developments in the peace process in the Middle East, and a number of international issues of common concern.

Egypt: Al-Qadhdhafi—Libya To Strengthen 'Cooperation' With Egypt

NC2805063896 Cairo MENA in Arabic 2140 GMT 27 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 27 May (MENA)—Colonel Mu'ammar al-Qadhdhafi, the leader of the Libyan revolution, tonight received at his residence at al-Qubbah Palace the members of the Committees for Foreign and Arab Relations, Defense, and National Security at the Consultative Council.

The three-hour meeting was attended by Dr. Usamah al-Baz, first Foreign Ministry under secretary and director of the President's Office for Political Affairs.

Col. al-Qadhdhafi announced during the meeting that his country is ready to immediately start strengthening cooperation and integration with Egypt first, then with Sudan and the other Arab countries, out of its concern for unity of Arab action.

He said: We in Libya have formed a commission tasked with developing southern Libya, where there is a great deal of water, to absorb the excess population from Egypt based on our being a united people and in confirmation of the Arab homeland's Arab identity.

Al-Qadhdhafi pointed out that he previously signed four agreements with President Husni Mubarak — the "four freedoms." They are freedom to work, travel, and reside in and own property [between the two countries].

Col. al-Qadhdhafi said during his meeting with the parliamentary group that the Lockerbie issue is being presented in the West as a political issue, not a criminal case. It will be resolved soon, he noted.

He added that he had to travel 5,000 km by car to visit Egypt because of the air travel ban on Libya.

With regard to U.S. allegations that Libya is setting up a chemical weapons factory in Tarhunah, Col. al-Qadhdhafi said: The United States accused us of this when we built the al-Rabitah pharmaceutical factory. At that time we said the United States would soon claim we were building another chemical weapons factory. This actually happened in Tarhunah.

He added that Libya decided to construct a water channel for the Great River. The United States claimed it was a chemical weapons factory. Assuming it was a chemical weapons factory, he said, who gives the United States the right to attack some countries but not others?

Col. al-Qadhdhafi asked: Why does the United States not apply these standards to the Dimona nuclear reactor in Israel? All these accusations are simply terrorism against Libya so that Libya will capitulate to the United States.

Col. al-Qadhdhafi stressed the importance of extending bridges of construction among the Arab countries, as is the case with Cairo, Khartoum, Alexandria, Benghazi, Damascus, and Baghdad. He asks whether it is logical for us to travel between these capitals on desert highways without finding real progress, which extends to uniting these people in one melting pot.

He said: We in Libya want to establish a kind of understanding and cooperation among the peoples and countries of the Mediterranean Sea because Libya extends across 2,000 km of the Mediterranean Sea and cannot be isolated from it. But Libya refuses to link this understanding and cooperation with the Middle Eastern market, because that would mean outright recognition of Israel.

Col. al-Qadhdhafi held a dialogue with the members of the parliamentary committees as he welcomed them. He

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said: We place a great responsibility on your shoulders because you are an elite group of parliamentarians who are concerned with Arab relations and affairs.

The committee members asked brother Col. al-Qadhdhafi to set up a united Arab front to face the international economic blocs and axes and noted the need to unite the Arabs. They also asked him to employ his economic influence and put pressure on Turkey, which has huge investments and numerous workers in Libya, so that it might review its military agreements with Israel.

They also called for establishing an Arab parliament and council of ministers under the umbrella of the Arab League to meet on a permanent basis as well as holding periodic meetings among the Libyan people's committees and popular organizations in Egypt.

They demanded that Sudan hand over the three defendants in the case of the failed assassination attempt on President Husni Mubarak in Addis Ababa.

After the meeting Jum'ah al-Fazzani, secretary of the General People's Committee for Unity, expressed his joy at the meeting and said there are three reasons for this joy. He said: The first is the warm welcome the leader of our revolution was accorded. The second is the deep appreciation for his stances, because you shoulder the concerns of the nation, as he does. The third is the interest I have sensed regarding strengthening Egyptian-Libyan relations and establishing a qualitative change in these relations, then joining them through a popular fence.

Al-Fazzani said there is agreement to hold constant dialogue among the People's Assembly, the Consultative Council, and the Popular Committees, as well as agreements for dialogue among the professional unions and federations of the two countries.

Al-Fazzani noted his country's interest in uniting the people and establishing Arab unity. He pointed out that the Libyan People's Congress has passed many resolutions for this purpose, among them exempting any goods with an Arab certificate of origin from taxation.

He added: We have decided to give the Egyptian citizen the right to buy property in Libya and carry out economic activities, while exempting him from the two conditions of nationality and military service.

Egypt: Al-Sharif Comments on Mubarak-al-Qadhdhafi Talks

NC2605151296 Cairo Arab Republic of Egypt Radio Network in Arabic 1130 GMT 26 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] President Mubarak resumed his talks today with Colonel Mu'ammar al-Qadhdhafi, leader of the Libyan revolution, with an expanded meeting following a private discussion. They covered issues concerning Egypt and Libya.

Attending the meeting on the Egyptian side were Prime Minister Dr. Kamal al-Janzuri, Information Minister Safwat al-Sharif, Foreign Minister 'Amr Musa, Minister of Education Dr. Husayn Kamil Baha'-al-Din, and the head of the Presidential Office, Dr. Zakariya 'Azmi.

Present on the Libyan side were Foreign Liaison Secretary 'Umar al-Muntasir, Unity Secretary Jum'ah al-Fazzani, the official in charge of integration between Marsa Matruh and Tubruq, 'Umar Rashwan, the chairman of the Foreign Investment Company, Muhammad Huwayj, and the Libyan charge d'affaires in Cairo, Faraj al-Sa'iti.

The two Arab leaders held talks yesterday upon the arrival of Colonel al-Qadhdhafi in Cairo. They discussed issues concerning foreign policy, bilateral ties, and topics of mutual concern.

Information Minister Safwat al-Sharif said the Egyptian-Libyan summit dealt with Arab and regional developments. President Mubarak and Colonel Mu'ammar al-Qadhdhafi emphasized that developments require consultation among Arab leaders in light of new global circumstances to define the goals and obstacles facing Arab society.

The Egyptian-Libyan summit also asserted the need to achieve the required and necessary unity of Arab views to unify the Arab fold.

Al-Sharif added that relations between Egypt and Libya were discussed at length at today's meeting. Meetings of the joint committee between the two countries were reviewed. This was in addition to current projects, including the electrical grid between the two countries, the construction of railroads between them, and investment in current and future projects.

[In a related Cairo-datelined report, Cairo MENA in Arabic at 1240 GMT on 26 May adds the following: "Egyptian Information Minister Safwat al-Sharif said the Egyptian-Libyan talks included a dialogue and discussion of the best way to overcome division in the Arab position. They emphasized the importance of unifying the Arab fold and engaging in gradual joint Arab action in every sphere, including an Arab economic bloc

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through which the Arab nation's economic resources can be integrated.

["The Egyptian information minister said Colonel al-Qadhdhafi noted during the talks the importance of preserving [thought incomplete as received], especially Libyan issues and their positive impact on relations between the Egyptian and Libyan people and on ties between the two countries.

["Al-Sharif said the Egyptian-Libyan talks today asserted pan- Arab security, the importance of all the Arab countries' territorial integrity, the rejection of everything characterized by policies of alliances and axes that affect pan-Arab security, and the importance of the Arab world remaining under an Arab umbrella represented by the Arab League.

["He added that the talks also included discussions and consultations on proposed solutions to bring views closer in the Libyan-Western crisis. The Egyptian information minister said Colonel Mu'ammar al-Qadhdhafi noted that the ties between Egypt and Libya are characterized by sincerity, frankness, and national and pan-Arab trust in handling all the causes of the Arab nation."]

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Oman

Oman: Sultan Qabus Gives Palestinians $7 Million in Aid

NC2505202496 Paris AFP in English 1646 GMT 25 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Muscat, May 25 (AFP) — Oman's Sultan Qabus on Saturday [25 May] donated seven million dollars to the Palestinians to "ease their suffering" during talks with Palestinian President Yasir 'Arafat.

The official agency ONA said the two leaders also discussed the need to open diplomatic representations in each other's territories "as soon as possible."

According to 'Arafat's advisor Nabil Abu-Rudaynah, Oman will open an office in the autonomous Gaza Strip and the Palestinian Authority in Muscat before the end of the year. It will be the first Palestinian diplomatic representation in Oman where 'Arafat's PLO never had an office, as it did in other Arab states.

'Arafat arrived Saturday for a two-day official visit during which ONA said he would discuss with the sultan "ways of consolidating the peace process and ensuring stability for the Palestinian people."

Oman and Qatar are the only two Gulf countries to have made steps towards gradually normalising ties with Israel. The Jewish state on Tuesday opened a trade office in Oman, its first in a Gulf state.

It is 'Arafat's second trip to Oman this year. The Palestinian leader will visit Britain on June 3 for two days, Abu-Rudaynah told AFP.

The autonomous areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip have been subjected to a strict closure since the start of a wave of Palestinian militant suicide bombings in Israel on February 25 which left around 60 dead. Israel has said it intends to keep the closure in place until after general elections to be held on Wednesday, despite Palestinian claims that it is causing severe economic hardship.

Qatar

Qatar: Health Minister Said To Escape Assassination Bid

JN2605154196 Paris Radio Monte Carlo in Arabic 1500 GMT 26 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] AFP quotes a Qatari official, who asked to remain anonymous, as saying that the Qatari health minister escaped an assassination attempt in Doha on 24 May. He said there was no political motive behind the assassination attempt, adding that the motive was personal.

Qatar: Alleged Saboteurs Reportedly Arrested

LD2705222396 Riyadh SPA in Arabic 2256 GMT 27 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Doha, 27 May 96 — Security authorities in the State of Qatar have managed to arrest the people who fired shots at a gas station on the Wajbah road on the evening of 25 May, which coincided with the presence of Qatari Health Minister 'Ali Sa'id al-Khayarin.

The Qatari news agency quoted an official security source as saying: "On the basis of our interrogation of them and their confessions, it has become clear that their objective was sabotage."

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia: Shipping Line Statement on Incident With U.S. Sub

LD2505204796 Riyadh SPA in English 1938 GMT 25 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Riyadh, May 25, SPA — The Saudi National Shipping Line on Saturday issued a statement to refute a report carried by an information mean on three accidents witnessed by the ships of the company within three months. [sentence as received]

The statement said the accidents involving the Saudi/Makkah and Saudi/Qassim ships were caused by other parties while the accident of Saudi/Hafouf ship was triggered by a rare technical fault and had nothing to do with another party.

The company told the SAUDI PRESS AGENCY (SPA) that all necessary measures were taken for dealing with the accidents.

The statement said on May 17, 1996, the U.S. submarine Jacksonville collided with the Saudi/Makkah ship, 32 km from the (?Norfolk) port off the eastern coast of the United States while the ship was sailing from Baltimore to New York en route to the Middle East in a routine journey. The accident caused a hole in the body of the ship, one and a half meter above water surface, the crew members were unhurt and no damage was happened to the loaded materials of the ship which returned to (?Norfolk) port for repair before again leaving on Tuesday may 21, 1996.

Initial available information indicate that the captain of the Saudi ship has complied to all maritime regulations and bears no responsibility over what had happened, the statement said.

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Yemen

Yemen: Al-Iryani on Arbitration Accord With Eritrea

JN2405182696 Paris Radio Monte Carlo in Arabic 1545 GMT 24 May 96

[Interview with 'Abd-al-Karim al-Iryani, Yemeni deputy prime minister and foreign minister, by Salim Badawi in Paris; date not given; from "the Week's Event" program—recorded]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Al-Iryani] I assure you that, first, the two parties have committed themselves not to use force, and second, they have committed themselves to implement the ruling of the arbitration tribunal. Using force after a commitment not to resort to it and after the tribunal makes its ruling would be a foolish action by either party. As you know, and probably you are acquainted with the agreement, the two sides agreed that France would continue monitoring any military movement by either party, not only until the arbitration tribunal makes its ruling, but until the implementation of this ruling. There is nothing stronger than this commitment, and no one can doubt the commitment of the two sides to implement the ruling.

[Badawi] From Sanaa's point of you, does referring the case to international arbitration guarantee the Yemeni interests?

[Al-Iryani] First, before the acceptance of any country as a UN member state, this country should abide by the principles stipulated in the charter. Yemen did not commit itself to anything other than what the UN Charter calls for, which is to opt for peaceful solutions that include negotiations, mediation, reaching an agreement, and arbitration. Yemen accepted the fourth form, which is arbitration.

[Badawi] But can this Yemeni acceptance be considered a concession imposed by certain regional and international political circumstances?

[Al-Iryani] Acceptance of arbitration by any two disputed parties in the world is not a concession. On the contrary, this is something good. The only solution for such kinds of conflicts is arbitration or seeking a ruling by the International Court of Justice if negotiations and mediation efforts fail. As you know, there are several conflicts in the region. We, and I think the Eritrean brothers too, are proud that in spite of the high degree of tension that has existed, the two sides agreed to solve this crisis through arbitration. Any of the two parties who resorts to force, is then forced to seek negotiations or arbitration with the party which it used force against. Imposing the fait accompli is not proof that one of the two parties has demonstrated its sovereign right.

[Badawi] How do you interpret the absence of an Arab-African initiative concerning Hanish island—a problem of that size which deals with the strategic security of the Red Sea?

[Al-Iryani] We should not ignore the sad Arab situation. This situation was not only manifested during the Yemeni-Eritrean crisis; it has been there for many years. The two Arab and African organizations that can play a role in solving this dispute are the Arab League and the Organization of African Unity. Both of them welcomed and supported the Yemeni and Eritrean desire for a peaceful solution. However, the will of these organizations depends on the wills of their member states. So, we should not expect from them anything more than they can offer in terms of good offices.

[Badawi] France has a central and active role in reaching a settlement of the Hanish island dispute. How do you assess the role Paris has played, and how do you justify this?

[Al-Iryani] As I told journalists a short while ago, the French role came in response to a recommendation by the UN secretary general. The recommendation was a studied, accurate, and a wise one. This recommendation has many details. The two parties were convinced that France is the most qualified party to mediate a peaceful solution. I think that signing this agreement after about five months of mediation was proof that the choice was right and sound. Any mediator at any point may faces problems that may discourage him from being involved in seeking solutions to these problems and may cause him to abandon or ignore his mission. I think we can say confidently that France played its role with maximum patience, wisdom, and understanding.

Yemen: Scuffle Between Police, Group Seizing Land

JN2705200096 Sanaa Yemeni Republic Television Network in Arabic 1800 GMT 27 May 96

[Announcer-read report]

[FBIS Translated Text] A responsible source at the Interior Ministry told the YEMENI NEWS AGENCY, SABA', that at 1030 today, a group of persons tried to seize a state-owned plot of land at Fajj 'Ubtan in Sanaa. The group was trying to build on the land without obtaining permission or having a legitimate right to do so.

The source said that the security men rushed to the scene to stop the group. However, the group refused to obey the orders and resisted the security men by opening fire on them. The security men returned fire, killing one member of the group. Two security men were wounded and two by-passers were also killed. The members of

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the group were arrested and are being interrogated. They will be referred to the prosecution so that the necessary legal measures can be taken against them.

The responsible source urged the brother citizens to cooperate with the security agencies, observe law and order, and resort to the prosecution and the judiciary to settle any legal and legitimate problems or demands. It asserted that the security agencies will not hesitate to deal firmly with anybody who tries to disrupt security and violate law and order.

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Iraq: Saddam Urges Compliance With Dec '95 Economic Plan

JN2605114496 Baghdad INA in Arabic 1035 GMT 26 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Baghdad, 26 May (INA) — His Excellency President Saddam Husayn said that the value of the Iraqi dinar continues to increase as a result of market stability and economic developments in general. Consequently, the dinar will remain an asset now and in the future, the president noted.

The president made these remarks when he presided over the 20th cabinet session, during which cabinet members discussed market and economic developments since the signing of a memorandum of understanding between Iraq and the United Nations on the exchange of oil for food, medicine, and other basic necessities.

The participants at the cabinet session stressed that the plan formulated in President Saddam Husayn's letter of 2 December 1995, including the recommendations on how to reduce the amount of cash in circulation, will be implemented by the Council of Ministers and all state bodies. They added that the economic situation now and in the foreseeable future does not warrant a reconsideration of the contents of this letter and the measures included in it. As a matter of fact, current developments, including the signing of a memorandum of understanding with the United Nations, make it even more important to comply with the contents of this letter, which is the best way to improve the Iraqi economy.

When the cabinet discussed a bill regarding the observation of a national science day, President Saddam Husayn underscored the importance of science in continuing the country's quest for development. He also stressed the need to accord due attention to scientists. He ordered that the bill on introducing a science day be referred to the National Assembly.

The Council of Ministers discussed the possibility of manufacturing medicines locally in coordination with the industrial sector, the universities affiliated with the Higher Education Ministry, the Scientific Research Directorate, and the Ministry of Health by exploiting the available potential in this regard.

The council studied a plan for manufacturing drinking water pipes in light of the national industrial potentials.

The Council of Ministers also discussed the other topics on its agenda and took the necessary recommendations and decisions.

Iraq: Official—UN Deal Exchange for French, Russian Promise

NC2405133096 Paris AFP in English 1138 GMT 24 May 96

[Report by Acil Tabbara]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Baghdad, May 24 (AFP)—Iraq accepted the UN oil-for-food deal in exchange for a promise by France and Russia that they would work for a complete lifting of economic sanctions against Baghdad, an Iraqi official said Friday [24 May].

"France, Russia, Egypt and other countries gave us unwritten guarantees, a kind of gentlemen's agreement, to work for the lifting of economic sanctions, notably the oil embargo, at the conclusion of this agreement with the UN," the official, who requested anonymity, told AFP.

He added that Iraq had refused UN Resolution 986, allowing the sale of a limited amount of oil for humanitarian needs, when it was adopted in April 1995 because it was seen as "an attempt to take us back to the beginning" of the sanctions.

"What we hoped for was a lifting of the oil embargo, conforming to paragraph 22 of resolution 687, since we had fulfilled our commitments in the area of disarmament," the official said.

"But France, Russia and other friendly countries told us over the past few months that they did not intend to confront the United States and Britain over this subject," he added.

"They advised us to cut the legs out from under the United States and Britain by opening negotiations on resolution 986," the Iraqi official said.

The US and Britain have been the strongest opponents on the UN Security Council of lifting sanctions against Iraq until UN inspectors determine that Baghdad has fully complied with resolutions requiring it to dismantle its programs for building weapons of mass destruction.

France and Russia, which are likewise permanent members of the Security Council, have played an important role in convincing Iraq to accept the oil-for-food deal under resolution 986.

The deal signed Monday allows Iraq to export two billion dollars of oil every six months to buy food and medicine under strict controls. About one third of the proceeds will go to a UN fund to compensate victims of the Iraqi occupation, and another chunk to finance UN activities in Iraq.

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Iraq has been under crippling UN sanctions since its invasion of Kuwait in August 1990.

France and Russia were important trading partners with Iraq before the 1991 Gulf War that drove Iraqi forces from Kuwait, and both countries have a lot to gain if the sanctions are completely lifted, the Iraqi official said.

Iraq owes Russia about 10 to 16 billion dollars in unpaid business contracts, with France owed about five billion dollars, the official said.

According to a Western diplomat in Baghdad, "France and Russia insisted that Iraq accept resolution 986, portraying it as a first step towards a lifting of sanctions," which Iraq can "reasonably expect."

Expressing its satisfaction after the signing of the oil-for-food deal, Russia said the "agreement should not be considered a substitute for a lifting of the embargo on exports."

The official Iraqi newspaper AL-THAWRAH said Friday that Iraq "hoped and expected that members of the Security Council which have opposed US intervention will take a more courageous stand to lift the oil embargo."

The Iraqi official said his government has accepted the oil-for- food deal for diplomatic reasons as much economic ones.

"We are completely aware that this accord will only lead to a slight improvement in the humanitarian situation, because it provides only around seven dollars per month to each Iraqi," he said.

"But we accepted it to create an international climate conducive to a lifting of the economic sanctions," the Iraqi official added.

Iraq: Al-Anbari on Contacts To Export Oil Via Syria

JN2705190996 Dubayy AL-BAYAN in Arabic 26 May 96 pp 1, 15

[Report by Sa'd al-Mas'udi in Paris]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] 'Abd-al-Amir al-Anbari, head of the Iraqi delegation to negotiations with the United Nations, said that the oil-for-food agreement constitutes a new start in the relationship between Iraq and the international organization. Al-Anbari added that the value of the agreement does not lie in the financial aspect, which does not exceed $600 million every three months, but in the fact that it constitutes a start for both Iraq and the United Nations to work together in a spirit of cooperation to settle all suspended issues. Al-Anbari, who was speaking to AL-BAYAN after his return to Paris to resume his work at the UNESCO headquarters, said: At the same time, the agreement is the first step toward easing the suffering of the Iraqi people. [passage omitted]

Asked about the Iraqi proposal to open a pipeline to export limited Iraqi oil via Syria, the Iraqi chief delegate said that the purpose is not to export oil at this stage, but to show the United Nations that there is a third alternative in the future for exporting Iraqi oil. Al-Anbari said that this sign came following contacts between Baghdad and Damascus, noting that Iraq had rejected Resolution 706 because it restricted its oil export to the Turkish pipeline. [passage omitted]

Iraq: Possibility of Oil Exports in Jul Seen

NC2705104996 Paris AFP in English 0950 GMT 27 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Nicosia, May 27 (AFP)—Iraq could start exporting oil in July under the deal agreed with the United Nations on May 20, the specialist MIDDLE EAST ECONOMIC SURVEY (MEES) said Monday [27 May].

The weekly review said there was "no clear timetable" for the resumption of Iraqi oil sales as part of UN resolution 986, but that under "optimum conditions" exports could start "sometime in July."

Under the terms of the deal, which allows Iraq to sell two billion dollars of oil every six months to buy food and medicines, Baghdad must submit a distribution plan of proposed imports for UN approval.

The UN must also appraise the humanitarian needs of Iraq, an escrow bank account has to be set up by the UN to handle the oil funds, and oil experts and independent inspectors must be appointed.

In addition, procedures on how to monitor the export of oil and imports of goods to Iraq needs to be adopted by the UN Sanctions Committee.

"It is understood that Iraq and the UN secretariat have set an informal time frame of around a month to finalize approval of the distribution plan," said MEES, adding many observers believe the target is "too optimistic."

The MEES said there were two major problems on implementing the distribution plan: how a system of ration cards will work without it being exploited by the Iraqi government to favour supporters and penalise opponents, and how to deal with the Kurdish areas of Iraq which have been free of Baghdad control since 1991.

MEES said humanitarian organisations believe "there are no serious shortages of food and medicines in the

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Kurdish areas," and that the estimated 130-150 million dollars allocated to the Kurds each quarter under the deal should go towards "rebuilding the infrastructure" of the area.

The review added that French oil companies Elf Aquitaine and Total "will probably emerge as the main lifters of Iraqi crude (oil) from the Mediterranean."

The exact volume of Iraqi oil exports is as yet unknown, but MEES said that at a price of 16 dollars per barrel Iraq could sell 700,000 barrels per day, a target it could meet almost immediately.

Of the one billion dollars of oil sales generated every quarter, 30 percent will be allocated to the UN Compensation Fund for war reparations and five to 10 percent will pay for UN expenses inside Iraq — leaving around 600 million dollars for humanitarian needs.

The oil-for-food deal was the first easing of the UN sanctions imposed on Iraq after its invasion of Kuwait in August 1990.

Iraq: Minister on Ports Readiness To Receive Goods

JN2605125896 Baghdad INA in Arabic 0845 GMT 26 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Baghdad, 26 May (INA) — Iraq announced that its facilities and companies specializing in receiving merchant ships and transporting foodstuffs and basic needs are fully prepared and have completed preparations to transport the commodities that will arrive in the country, in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding signed on 20 May. In a statement to INA, Dr. Ahmad Murtada Ahmad, transport and communications minister, said that the jetties at the Arabian Gulf ports of Umm Qasr and Khawr al-Zubayr are ready to receive and unload more than 30,000 tonnes of commodities and foodstuffs per day. The minister added that in the first phase each jetty will be capable of receiving and unloading 2,000 tonnes, or the load of a big ship, daily.

The minister said that his ministry's operation and technical teams prepared a plan to receive merchant ships and oil tankers at its national ports on the Arabian Gulf, south of al-Basrah, 600 km south of Baghdad.

The transport and communications minister noted that his ministry completed the requirements to increase the unloading capacity in light of the expected increase of imports, in addition to the other requirements, such as handling equipment, storage, unloading areas, transportation equipment inside the port, support maritime units, and land transport trucks fleets. The minister expected the arrival of foodstuff cargoes at the Iraqi ports in the next few weeks.

The minister said that the State Enterprise for Railroads also completed preparations to transport foodstuffs and basic commodities from the port jetties to Iraqi governorates. He added that the ministry prepared technical cadres to maintain trucks, railroad cars, and trailers so as to keep the flow of cargo unloading and transportation once commodities arrive in Iraq.

Iraq: Explosion Reportedly Rocks Saddam's Birthplace

NC2405155896 (Clandestine) Voice of Iraqi Islamic Revolution in Arabic 1430 GMT 24 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] A four-kg bomb exploded inside a government building in al-'Awja village, the birthplace of tyrant Saddam Husayn. The front of the building was destroyed and one of the regime's henchmen was killed in the explosion.

This was reported by BADR newspaper in its 20 May edition. It said that the explosion, which violently shook the village, was possibly carried out by the supporters of Husayn Kamil, the tyrant's slain son-in-law, who have started to become active in Tikrit, al-'Awja, and the capital Baghdad.

The paper added that the town of Tikrit and its suburbs are still the scene of struggles among members of the ruling family. It reported that the regime's security services defused a time bomb planted to blow up a bridge in Tikrit two weeks ago.

Citing sources connected to the regime, the paper said that the regime is implementing a security plan in Tikrit and the vicinity that aims to penetrate the families and groups that have declared their hostility to the regime by sending a large number of officers and intelligence officers to these areas.

Iraq: Regime Reportedly Bombs Kurdish Farms

NC2605170096 (Clandestine) Voice of the People of Kurdistan in Arabic 1600 GMT 26 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The chauvinistic ruling regime in Baghdad has resumed its criminal policy against the masses of Kurdistan, particularly in the liberated areas. The 'Aflaqite regime's forces bombarded farms in the liberated areas near Khanaqin yesterday. The bestial shelling caused grave material damage to the farms.

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Iraq: PUK Offers To Discuss Peace Plan, Rejects Proposed Venue

NC2505165596 (Clandestine) Voice of the People of Kurdistan in Arabic 1600 GMT 25 May 96

[Statement issued by the PUK Political Bureau on 24 May]

[FBIS Translated Text] In the public interest and in order to ensure the success of the peace plan, to extend the Kurdish parliament's legal term, and to make it more active, and in appreciation for the efforts made by friendly countries, Kurdish parties, and the known patriotic figures in Irbil and al- Sulaymaniyah who unanimously agreed to hold a meeting between the political bureaus of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan [PUK] and the Kurdistan Democratic Party [KDP] on 27 May in the area between Mulla 'Umar and (Shawus) on the Irbil-Salah-al-Din road, and as this proposal has been approved by Mas'ud Barzani and the KDP Political Bureau:

The PUK announces that it is ready to send a high-level delegation to the Salah-al-Din resort to discuss the peace plan and the extension of the parliament's legal term instead of holding a meeting in the area between Mulla 'Umar and (Shawus).

The PUK is exerting its utmost efforts to strengthen Kurdish brotherhood and consolidate peace and accord in Kurdistan in the public interest of our people and as a prelude for tackling all the other problems.

Iraq: Regime Reportedly Uses Paper Factory To Make Ammunition

NC2405155496 (Clandestine) Voice of Iraqi Islamic Revolution in Arabic 1430 GMT 24 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The tyrant Saddam Husayn's regime is at present using the paper factory in al-Basrah Governorate for military purposes.

An informed source said that the regime is manufacturing rocket propellants and artillery shells. Explosive materials are mixed with the paper and the paste is cut in the shape of large paper pieces that are later transported to the al-Qa'qa' and Hittin military establishments.

The source added that those supervising this project are physics engineer 'Awn Badr and chemical engineers Muhammad Hasan and Kifah Jabbar.

The regime's objective in this project is to equip its special forces with the type of ammunition closely monitored by the United Nations.

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Israel: Peres, Netanyahu Hold Televised Debate

TA2605183096 Jerusalem Israel Television Channel 1 Network in Hebrew 1749 GMT 26 May 96

[Debate between Israeli Prime Minister Shim'on Peres and Likud Chairman Binyamin Netanyahu moderated by Dan Margalit in Tel Aviv on 26 May—recorded]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Margalit] Good evening to the audience at home and to the two candidates for prime minister: Mr. Shim'on Peres and Mr. Binyamin Netanyahu. The 1996 television debate now begins. It will start with each candidate presenting their track records and personal resumes. Mr. Peres, the first 90 seconds are yours.

[Peres] Good evening. We have had four exceptional years. Israel has marched forward. As for the future, the choice is not between right and left but rather between moving forward or sliding backward — between the settlement process, which will halt the peace process and bring back the intifadah; and the peace process, which will lead us to real peace in the Middle East. Over the past three weeks, Mr. Binyamin Netanyahu has concocted a terrible libel that I want to divide Jerusalem. He has caused damage to Israel and Jerusalem by making it appear as though part of the Israeli people wish to partition the city. The verse "If I forget thee O Jerusalem, may my right hand lose its cunning" has accompanied me all my life and will continue to accompany me until my dying day. Under our peace policy, Jerusalem will remain a united city, the eternal capital of Israel, and exclusively Israel's capital. We united Jerusalem and will remain united around it. All my life I have made efforts to unite the people. Even in this time of decision, we will submit the political agreements to the people in a national referendum in order to maintain national unity.

[Margalit] Thank you very much, Mr. Peres, for those 90 seconds. Mr. Binyamin Netanyahu, you have a minute and a half.

[Netanyahu] Good evening. I am pleased to have the opportunity to explain my program for leading the country. In another three days, you will have to choose which of our two paths can bring Israel true peace and real security. The course proposed by Mr. Peres will bring neither peace nor security. It will bring us fear. Our children are afraid to get on a bus. Many of you viewers watching right now get up in the morning and ask yourselves whether the next terrorist attack will occur today.

Mr. Peres, you have brought our security situation to an unprecedented low. This is a direct result of your deplorable policy, which placed the war on terrorism and the security of our children in the hands of 'Arafat. I will follow a different policy. A policy based on three clear principles: first of all, I will give responsibility for security back to the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] and the Shin Bet. Second, I will propose to the Palestinians a fair arrangement: self-administration, but not a Palestinian state that will threaten our existence. Third, I will hold peace negotiations with all our neighbors, cautiously, responsibly, and patiently while maintaining our security, the Golan Heights, and above all, a united Jerusalem. This is our path. I believe that we can live here without fear. I believe that we can achieve peace, and I call on you this evening: With your help, and God willing, we will together lead the State of Israel into the 21st century. With security, economic prosperity, and true peace with all our neighbors.

[Margalit] Gentlemen, the questions in this debate were formulated by me and only me. The rules were fixed by both parties. I am considerably restricted in my right to present supplementary or clarifying questions. In some cases I do not have such a right. The time granted to each candidate is of course equal. All the arrangements, as has been said in the campaign advertising, are the sole responsibility of the parties. This is, of course, the first debate held in Israel under the new law of direct election of the prime minister, something that will feature to some degree during the debate.

My first question is addressed to you, Mr. Peres. I wish to present it almost in direct continuation to what you said in your opening remarks. Yasir 'Arafat says that if Jerusalem does not become the capital of Palestine, he will initiate a jihad. You, on the other hand, say that you are committed to Jerusalem's remaining the united sovereign capital of Israel. I ask you whether that undertaking will be upheld if the Palestinians resume the intifadah; and if as a result of that policy there is a rift with Jordan, North Africa, the Gulf states, and Egypt, how will you stand up to it?

[Peres] Jerusalem is not facing any division and there will not be any compromise over Jerusalem. As to Yasir 'Arafat's remarks, let me tell you a story. I attended a news conference with 'Arafat. A journalist asked: Mr. 'Arafat, you talk about a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital. 'Arafat looked at the journalist and said: What, can't I dream? That is my response. For a dream, one person is enough. For an agreement, you need two. The fact is that we removed Jerusalem from the autonomy. I am totally convinced that we will manage to keep Jerusalem united as the capital of Israel and reach true peace.

[Margalit] Mr. Peres, would that continue to be the situation if the intifadah is resumed, since an important

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element supporting you is the Arabic factions, which already in Operation Grapes of Wrath showed they have the power to reduce your military and political room for maneuver?

[Peres] Before we started the Oslo process, we were told we would not succeed in removing Jerusalem from the autonomy. In Camp David, it was with great difficulty that Jerusalem was removed from the autonomy. We kept Jerusalem out of the autonomy. We kept the settlements out of the autonomy. I am certain that the compromise also commits the Palestinians. They, not we, will make the compromise on Jerusalem. Jerusalem was never an Arabic or Palestinian capital. The Jewish people never had any other capital besides Jerusalem. Listen, I am an experienced person and I do not bandy words about. I am convinced deep in my heart that an opportunity has now been created to make peace, with Jerusalem remaining the united capital of Israel.

[Margalit] Thank you, Mr. Peres. The next question is for Mr. Netanyahu. You are prepared to invest less than 1.3 billion shekels in settlements, but still a considerable amount. On the other hand, you say that you are aware of the reality and accept the Oslo accords, but you will not withdraw or redeploy in Hebron at present although under certain circumstances you would be prepared to meet with Yasir 'Arafat. Still, you undertake to close Orient House, something that even the Yitzhaq Shamir government did not do. Tell us what in that all that potpourri is policy and what is campaigning.

[Netanyahu] I thank you for the question, but before responding I must refer to what Mr. Peres said about Jerusalem. Mr. Peres, it is not important what you say here this evening, because in practice you are dividing Jerusalem. You refuse to close down Orient House; you refuse to expel Jibril al-Rujub's men from Jerusalem; you hid — I have the letter here — the fact that you sent a letter to Yasir 'Arafat in which you undertook to keep the PLO's institutions in Jerusalem, and my friend Beni Begin disclosed it in the Knesset. You now say: We removed Jerusalem from the autonomy — I just heard you say that — but Jerusalem is part of the autonomy. The Arab inhabitants of Jerusalem participated in the autonomy elections. Therefore, what you say here is of no importance because in practice you are dividing Jerusalem. Why should we believe you?

As to your question. I am totally consistent in my vision about the State of Israel, my desire to see it live in peace with all its neighbors. I have a vision, but I am also linked to reality. That is the duty of a statesman. The reality has been imposed on us by Mr. Peres. He brought the Palestinian Authority [PA] into six towns. I do not intend to return there, neither to Gaza nor to Janin. I plan to continue along the path I described, the road of self-administration, while upholding security and keeping united Jerusalem in our hands. You ask about 'Arafat. It is not my heart's desire to tour the palaces of Europe with him as Mr. Peres does. He has still not upheld his commitments. He did not annul the Palestinian Charter, contrary to what Mr. Peres declared. If he keeps his promises, good. But the question is not who will meet 'Arafat, but who is led by him, who depends on him. That is the difference between me and Mr. Peres.

[Margalit] Mr. Netanyahu, your time is up. But I want to ask you a supplementary question. I asked it before and you responded as you did. If the intifadah is resumed as a result of your policy, then despite your wishes, will you return the IDF to the casbah in Nabulus and the alleyways and refugee camps of Gaza?

[Netanyahu] I must tell you that in my experience with Arab representatives in general and my experience in public and covert contacts at the United Nations, the Foreign Ministry, and the Prime Minister's Office, the Arabs are much more realistic than they are presented. When they see a weak government, like Mr. Peres' government, they demand everything, get everything, and demand more. Mr. Peres promised them half of Jerusalem. Now they are also demanding 40 percent of west Jerusalem. But when they face a government that knows how not to cross the red lines — and we know how to do that — they are usually pacified. When we attended the Madrid conference the intifadah was already behind us. I plan to negotiate peace; I plan to lead the State of Israel with security, and I am certain that all the Arab leaders without exception — the Palestinians, the Syrians, the Jordanians, the Saudis — say they will negotiate peace with me, and it will be a true peace that will be a viable and a secure peace.

[Margalit] Thank you, Mr. Netanyahu. Both candidates responded to the questions in as much detail as they chose.

I have already said that this time the elections for prime minister are personal; therefore, although it is difficult for the moderator, there is no choice but to ask personal questions. Mr. Peres, you are 73 years old. Does that affect your ability to be prime minister and defense minister? Were you recently given a medical examination, and can you tell us what the results were? Might your age not affect your negotiating capacity because of a desire to conclude agreements before your term ends?

[Peres] I will just say something about your previous question. Mr. Binyamin Netanyahu made an agreement with [Arab Democratic Party Knesset Member] Mr.

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Darawshah to prevent building in Jerusalem neighborhoods, and he calls himself a strong man.

Had we needed to choose a model and not a prime minister, age would have been an issue. My health is excellent. I am at my full work capacity and I have a young mind. I know many people who are young in years but whose thoughts are old and trite, and they think in the past. I feel I am in good condition, full of conviction, full of mission, and I know where I am heading because of my exceptional experience.

[Margalit] Mr. Peres, the question nevertheless arises whether you were not hasty in declaring the Golan Heights Syrian soil because you wanted to conclude the matter speedily, at least in the coming term. Is that also not the case with your declaration that in return for peace in the Middle East, you are prepared to give up Israel's nuclear option?

[Peres] You are not talking about declarations, you are talking about quotes from the newspapers. They are not the same. With the Syrians, we negotiated for four years. On one matter we reached agreement, on another we did not. We reached agreement that the negotiations with Syria and Lebanon will be to end the conflict in the entire Middle East. On the parameters of the negotiations with Syria itself, we did not reach agreement because we insist that there be borders and security arrangements, that the water issue be settled, and that there be full normalization. We will handle the negotiations with resolution and patience, and we will reach an agreement. On the nuclear option question, you even insult me. I built the nuclear reactor, I decided the policy. All the Likud spokesmen, except for several people who just talk, said that when....

[Margalit, interrupting] I am sorry, Mr. Peres, but your time is up.

I would like to turn to Binyamin Netanyahu and recall the videocassette affair. Mr. Netanyahu has already expressed regret over the affair. [Netanyahu appeared on television admitting he had had an adulterous relationship and that he had been informed that a Likud leader had a videocassette of the affair]. I ask you, Mr. Netanyahu, whether your rash behavior on that day did not put into doubt your ability to head the government of Israel, where the prime minister has to make life and death decisions on short notice and with cool judgment?

[Netanyahu] I made life and death decisions behind enemy lines as an officer at a very young age. Believe me, they were mature and tough decisions. But in reference to the affair you mentioned, I expressed deep regret over it. It hurt me, it hurt my wife and my family. It was a mistake, but the mistake Mr. Peres is making now and made over the past four years hurts the entire people of Israel.

People live in fear. They are scared to send their children to malls, to play in parks. I hear parents say: We are scared. The entire nation is living in fear because of the mistake Mr. Peres made. He tries to run the entire campaign by attacking my personality. My record, my family, is being disgraced, as is my patriotism and my competence for the job. I asked myself why Mr. Peres, who has been humiliated more than anybody else in Israeli politics, is participating in that campaign. It is disappointing. I expected more from him. I reached one conclusion: He does not have any answers to the real questions the public is asking. Why does he plan to descend from the Golan Heights? Why is he ready to divide Jerusalem? Why is he ready to set up a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital? Why did he put security in the hands of 'Arafat? What other statesman in the world would have done that? Since Mr. Peres is not prepared to provide us with those answers, he tries to run away by making a personal attack on me. It will not work. We will remain loyal to the issues before and after the elections, when we will form the next government.

[Margalit] Mr. Netanyahu, still on the personal level. After your military service, you returned to the United States, regained your U.S. citizenship, and changed your name to Benjamin Nitay. Is it legitimate for Israelis to think that you considered remaining in the United States and not returning to Israel?

[Netanyahu] Not for one moment, not for one moment. The facts you described are all incorrect. I had an American passport from birth which was renewed. But I want to tell you something. I come from a Zionist, Jewish family which has roots in this country going back 100 years. I am angry — not with you, you are just repeating what others are saying — that people try to question my readiness to fight for this country, being a member of a family that sacrificed and fought for this state on the battlefields and on the political frontline. I do not have to apologize to anybody, I do not have to present certificates to show how kosher I am — I have enough of them. I think that the important thing at the moment is to ask a simple question. How do we progress to the main issue? How to return security, how to bring true peace. I want to tell you, Mr. Peres, it is not enough to be photographed with children, we have to defend the children. That is what I plan to do. That is the peace I plan to bring. Peace cannot be separated from security. They go together.

[Margalit] Thank you very much, Mr. Netanyahu. The stage of the debate in which I am allowed to ask a

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single subsequent question is over, and we are moving to another subject. I would like to ask Mr. Peres — no, not about the establishment of a national unity government; no, I would not ask this question either of him or of Mr. Netanyahu; they are already experts on this one — still, if you can form the next government on the basis of the Labor platform, will you, Mr. Peres, form a government with Meretz and the Arab parties, or alternatively, with the NRP [National Religious Party] and the ultra-Orthodox parties? Of these two groups, with whom do you prefer to form your government?

[Peres] Anyone who wants to go for peace, I will offer that he join the coalition. I do not rule anybody out. I do not base myself on frameworks but rather on content. It is in vain that Mr. Netanyahu is trying to scare people and sow fears. We are a nation that has known several wars. We won all the wars and so we shall also beat terrorism so as to clear the way for peace. The opportunity is open over the next four years to reach a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. There are people of little faith who nurture a depth of hatred toward the Arabs and a picture of deep gloom for the Jews, while doing nothing. Let me tell you: I will call on all parties that want to move forward toward peace and economic prosperity: We will deal a deadly blow to terror, despite all this sowing of fear, and the country will look different four years from now. It looks extraordinarily well now, following the establishment of the Rabin government, and it will look even better. I am full of trust, confidence, and experience, and have no doubt as to where we are heading.

[Margalit] Thank you very much, Mr. Peres. Let me turn to Mr. Netanyahu now. A while ago Mr. Netanyahu received a letter from NRP leader Zvulun Hammer, who described the Supreme Court as an extension of Meretz. Last Monday I heard an announcement by Mr. Netanyahu, who believes that the pace of forming those basic laws that concern the guaranteeing of women's status, human and civil rights, and the Supreme Court's status, should be slowed down. Let me ask you, Mr. Netanyahu: Why stop, why slow down; in fact, why not enhance the standing of the High Court of Justice in Israeli society?

[Netanyahu] I will answer you momentarily, but I must first address myself to something Mr. Peres said, to correct an inaccuracy on his part. He said that it is I who sows fear. Mr. Peres, you do not open a single cabinet meeting without receiving and publicizing a report about numerous warnings of terror attacks. We await the next attack daily, so please do not tell me stories.

Now to your question. I think that Israeli society is pluralistic. It is made up of religious and nonreligious people, and one should exercise caution. I surely have respect for the High Court of Justice. I am in favor of human and civil rights, make no mistake. We should make careful progress with regard to relations between the religious and nonreligious groups, and maintain the status quo and a correct balance. Since I believe that we are going to win these elections, my general direction, my desire, will be to form as wide a government as possible, to form a government with a wide national consensus, because the present government is witness to what happens when you have a narrow government that causes a rift between left and right, a polarization between religious and nonreligious, and an increasing gap between the poor and the rich, a terrible poverty which is on the rise. This is dangerous for the state. I want to form a government that will be made up primarily of our natural partners: the national and the religious camps. Later, I will appeal to Mr. Peres to join us on the basis of our basic guidelines. I believe that only with a wide national consensus, on the basis of the approach and principles that I have outlined here, will we be able to advance toward peace, which is complicated rather than simple and which has become more complicated. Still, we will be able to make progress on this only with our policy — and a Likud government, enjoying a wide consensus, will bring a good peace to the people of Israel, I believe.

[Margalit] Thank you very much, Mr. Netanyahu. The deficit in Israel's balance of payments has skyrocketed, and inflation too has reached double digits. The Prime Minister's Office is discussing budget cuts for next year. Let me ask you, Mr. Shim'on Peres: If you form the government, where will you cut in the state budget so that this celebration, possibly somewhat imaginary or inflated, will not seem like a permanent state of affairs to the Israeli citizen who will learn where the budget will be cut, whether this will be in housing, health, security, social welfare, or education?

[Peres] Dan, I am not a novice in this profession. I entered my position following a Likud government that brought about an inflation of 500 percent which we boiled down to 18 percent. The secrets of inflation are clear to me. We will need to cut the state budget, and a little in every sphere, but this time less than before because of the large Israeli economic growth which has been the largest in the Western world — there has been none like it, and it is continuing full steam ahead. We can, in fact, cut from the growth rather than effect a real budget cut. By all parameters Israel has recently undergone an economic miracle. It is true that the deficit in the balance of payments has risen, since we buy a lot of machinery for manufacturing — this too is imports — and since people travel abroad more and enjoy higher

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standards of living. Exports have risen to 30 percent. You know, from the viewpoint of GNP, for the first time in history we are on a par with Britain. Who dared dream of this? And let me tell you, in four years we will reach European standards of living. The number of students in the educational system has doubled, and the same holds true for research and development. Some 1,800 km of roads have been paved. I am telling you, when I read the figures, there is no such thing anywhere in the Western world.

[Margalit] Thank you very much, Mr. Peres. Now to Mr. Netanyahu. On another occasion you said, in the words of President George Bush, Read my lips [in English and repeated in Hebrew], I will not raise taxes. You went even further to say that you would rather reduce them. Is it serious to propose a decrease in taxes, a cut in government expenditures, while not harming the level of employment and services which Israeli citizens may be and are already receiving in the State of Israel, all at the same time?

[Netanyahu] Well, I must first correct Mr. Peres again. He describes our economic growth as the largest. Read Avraham Tal [an economic writer and commentator] in your paper, HA'ARETZ, which is not exactly sympathetic to the Likud. He said that the rate of economic growth was larger over the last two years of the Likud government — indeed, it exceeded 6 percent — while now, under Mr. Peres, it is less than 6 percent. One can say anything. You can say that inflation is all right, but it was 9 percent when you, Labor, assumed power, while now it is 14 percent. Housing prices have soared. They are going up all the time, and people cannot buy apartments. You can tell us about the wonderful state of the economy, but anybody who is in the know economically is aware that we have a national overdraft which is growing at an increasing rate. It will be a problem for our government to deal with, but we will. How? We will do this by, first and foremost, introducing a free economy here. There is no such economy yet. We will privatize companies, we will defreeze state lands so as to lower housing prices, we will cut bureaucracy — and yes, we will clearly diminish the terrible poverty gap, and also cut taxes. The tax burden is heavy, one of the heaviest in the world in this idyll that Mr. Peres is describing to us. I believe that this is the road that will lead the State of Israel to the 21st century, so that every citizen will be able to enjoy the huge potential inherent in this nation. I would also like to tell you that I am convinced that following my way, with a face to the future, with an economy with which I am very familiar...[pauses] I know what to do in this sphere. We usually do not talk about this, but you know that this is my education and vocational training. I intend to turn the State of Israel into one of the leading economies in the 21st century.

[Margalit] Thank you very much. Gentlemen, in all debates the participants await surprising questions by the moderator who may succeed or fail in this, but in the present debate, the moderator too may be surprised due to the novelty involved. The candidates will take turns in presenting a question to each other. The first person to pose a question is Mr. Binyamin Netanyahu. Go ahead, please.

[Netanyahu] Mr. Peres, your government made security in Israel hit an unprecedented low. You put our security in the hands of Muhammad Dahlan, Jibril al-Rujub, and Yasir 'Arafat. The result is that people live in fear. This is the situation today, and my question is: What has happened to the vision of the New Middle East you promised us?

[Peres] The answer is that we are in a transitional period. The old Middle East is clearing the way to the new one. I paid visits to Oman and Qatar and heard our national anthem played there. What is this if not a new Middle East? I was in Casablanca where an economic conference attended by all Middle East countries took place. I was in Sharm al-Shaykh with 30 leaders who agreed to fight terror. Terror has been there all along, even when no peace process was taking place, but now the peace process will put an end to terror. There are people, lacking in patience, who have turned fear into a partisan matter. We have known wars throughout our history, but this time, triumphing over wars will be through a permanent, genuine peace. This is an enormous hope for the young generation. We must not miss it. There are difficulties indeed, there are also victims, but we have never been daunted by them, nor will we take to our hills or submit this time — neither to terror, nor to terrorists, nor to those who fear terror or the terrorists.

[Margalit] Thank you. Mr. Peres, what is your question to Mr. Netanyahu?

[Peres] I do not have a question for Mr. Netanyahu. I would rather make a request of him. A week ago Mr. Netanyahu accused senior IDF commanders, including the Intelligence chief, of not telling the truth and of an attempt to describe Iran as not fighting terror, as it were [sentence as heard]. I am asking him to retract his words.

[Margalit] Thank you.

[Netanyahu] Mr. Peres is not being accurate, again. As for Iran, we all know that Iran constitutes a danger for the State of Israel and should be fought. We should, however, fight its extensions here too. You, Mr. Peres,

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always said that Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] is our partner [as heard]. I have now heard that Hamas struck an agreement with 'Arafat to put off anti-Israeli attacks until after the elections. This is the method — until after the elections — so that you can be elected. No matter, though. I am not saying that you are a partner of Hamas, but let me say one thing. I am saying that your policy is building a large Iranian base for Hamas. You created the safe havens. You are leading the increase in fundamentalism at the gates of our towns. This is in fact what you are doing. Do you want to fight the danger of Iran? Iran wants to liquidate the State of Israel and could not care less whether it is Shim'on Peres or Binyamin Netanyahu who heads the country subject to annihilation. Still, I know we can fight Iran, both on the international arena as well as its extensions here, by regaining responsibility for this war, conducting it in a responsible, firm, and relentless manner. I have no doubt that we can regain responsibility for security and restore security in our towns. Above all, Mr. Peres, I think it is time you understand that we must tread a different path. We will follow it, and I believe we will restore to the people of Israel the hope for a true peace, for the Middle East as it truly is.

[Margalit] Thank you. We are nearing the end of this debate. Whoever answered, answered; and whoever did not, did not. It is time to sum up now. You are the first to sum up, Mr. Peres.

[Peres] Six months ago the Israeli prime minister, my friend, the late Yitzhaq Rabin, was assassinated. For me, that was a terrible shock. The nation was bewildered. I had to unite the nation and carry on with the work. Yitzhaq Rabin was murdered in front of my eyes, otherwise it would have been him sitting in my place now. The missionary was murdered, but not his mission. The mission of establishing a true peace, full security, and economic prosperity, has remained unchanged. I am appealing to all voters: Do not let the mission be cut off. Let us continue it courageously until the country reaches great and enormous goals for the entire nation and especially for the young generation. This is both possible and necessary.

[Margalit] Thank you very much, Mr. Peres. It is Mr. Netanyahu's turn to sum up now.

[Netanyahu] Thank you for watching this important debate. Mr. Peres' policy that led the State of Israel over the last four years has failed, while now I hear from Mr. Peres that he intends to keep it up, and more intensively so. This means that a Palestinian state, with Jerusalem as its capital, will be set up; that we will get off the Golan Heights; and that we will face another, certain escalation in terror. Mr. Peres' course does not lead to either peace or security. It only guarantees that we will continue to live in fear.

We have a different course, in all spheres. We will guarantee a free economy and better social standards to all Israeli citizens, but the basic condition for the achievement of these goals is to pursue the road that will bring about true peace and security. We have such a road. I believe in it with all my heart, but it is not just me, but also the decisive majority of the public watching us now, that believe in it. We are approached by people constantly, from both right and left, people like Professor Yehoshu'a Porat, a former Meretz member; Avraham Tamir, who used to be Mr. Peres' director general; and former Chief of Staff Dan Shomron. They and many others come to us because they want to guarantee that our children will not live in fear. Therefore, I am calling on you this evening: Join us all so that we can guarantee a future of hope, a future of peace, a future of security, a better future for the State of Israel, and God willing, we will have our way.

[Margalit] Thanks to Mr. Netanyahu. I personally thank both Mr. Peres and Mr. Netanyahu for having put their trust in me and allowed me to moderate this debate. This debate has come to an end now. What more can we say? To use the language of our forefathers: May you choose the good, and may we all have it good, and a good evening to you all.

Israel: Labor, Likud Strategists Claim Victory in TV Debate

TA2705070596 Jerusalem THE JERUSALEM POST in English 27 May 96 p 3

[Report by Michal Yudelman]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] After the television debate was taped yesterday morning, moderator Dan Margalit raised his list of questions above his head and said: "One hour ago they would have given anything to know what was in these papers. Now," throwing the sheets up in the air, "they're not worth a thing. Sic transit gloria mundi."

When Prime Minister Shim'on Peres and Likud leader Binyamin Netanyahu entered the studio, they shook hands. Peres then leaned toward his opponent and said: "You have a stain on your jacket."

Netanyahu reportedly panicked for a moment, but then Peres burst into laughter and the ice was broken.

It was a tense 30 minutes for the two candidates. But the journalists, aides, and politicians watching the taping agreed afterward that both had given a dignified performance in an aggressive debate that set new

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standards in local election campaigns. The questions, they declared, were excellent.

But Margalit himself professed disappointment.

"I didn't succeed in expressing myself as a journalist, because I wasn't allowed to ask follow-up questions," he said. "So we didn't get answers to the many questions the candidates evaded."

He spoke of "an atmosphere of alienation, even detachment between the candidates, and here and there even mutual barbs. Not one moment of smiles."

But Peres was smiling widely when he came out of the studio to join his ministers and aides after the debate.

"I was calm, because I know that what I have to say is the truth and based on experience. They murdered one prime minister; they won't murder the mission," he said.

He couldn't resist another jab at his rival: "For a few more votes, Netanyahu conducted, for three weeks, day after day, a Soviet brainwashing slander. Is this how they want to win? You can make a sound bite, but you can't make a truth bite."

As expected, both Labor and Likud strategists claimed victory, but observers pointed out that while both candidates demonstrated certain strengths, neither won by a knockout.

"Netanyahu was more conscious of the television medium and was livelier in arm and head movements," said one political analyst. "Peres, on the other hand, appeared more static, but also more relaxed and experienced."

Israel: Poll Shows Peres More Convincing in TV Debate

TA2705084396 Tel Aviv MA'ARIV in Hebrew 27 May 96 p 1

[Public opinion poll by the Hanokh and Rafi Smith Institute]

[FBIS Translated Text] Question: Regardless of your political views, who do you think was more convincing in last night's television debate between Shim'on Peres and Binyamin Netanyahu?

Answer: Peres (42 percent); Netanyahu (38 percent); both were equally convincing (14 percent); did not know (6 percent).

The poll was conducted among 170 spectators last night at the end of the transmission of the debate on Channel 1. The margin of error is approximately 7 percent and the sample only reflects the general trend.

Israel: Polls Gage Voting Trend Before, After TV Debate

TA2705091496 Tel Aviv YEDI'OT AHARONOT in Hebrew 27 May 96 p 3

[FBIS Translated Text] A public opinion poll conducted yesterday by Dr. Mina Tzemah's Dahaf Institute before the Peres-Netanyahu televised debate posed the following question: Were elections to the premiership held today, who would you vote for? (Results quoted in percentage points, with results of previous poll given in brackets)

Answer: Peres — 50.5 (50.3); Netanyahu — 46.5 (45.8); undecided/did not reply — 3 (3.9).

The poll was conducted among 583 respondents who constitute a representative sample of Israel's adult population. The maximum margin of error is 4 percent.

The Geocartographia Institute also polled the same question yesterday before the debate. (Results quoted in percentage points, with results of previous poll given in brackets)

Answer: Peres — 49.5 (51); Netanyahu — 47.1 (45); undecided/did not reply — 3.4 (4).

The poll was conducted among 1,031 respondents who constitute a representative sample of Israel's adult population. The maximum margin of error is 3 percent.

Dahaf Institute poll conducted another poll at the end of the televised debate on Channel 1 last night, posing the following question: Who was more convincing, Shim'on Peres or Binyamin Netanyahu? (All answers quoted in percentage points)

	Peres	Netanyahu	Both equally	Neither
General	41	45	8	6
Left-wing voters	79	12	7	2
Right-wing voters	9	82	8	1

Another question polled was: Did you change your voting plans or did you finally make up your mind if you were still undecided after watching the debate?

Answer: The debate did not affect my voting plans (93.9); switched from undecided or from supporting Netanyahu to supporting Peres (2.4); switched from undecided or from supporting Peres to supporting Netanyahu (3.7).

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The poll was conducted among 364 respondents who constitute a representative sample of Israelis who watched the debate on Channel 1. The maximum margin of error is 5.2 percent.

A high number of spectators watched the Peres-Netanyahu debate. Some 28.8 percent of the public watched the debate from 2045 and 2115 on Channel 1, while 16.2 percent watched Channel 2 during the same time.

Some 29.6 of the public watched the debate on Channel 2 from 2230 to 2300, while 6.3 percent watched Channel 1 during the same time, according to a poll conducted by Teleseqer for Channel 2. The poll also shows that the number of Israelis watching the debate doubled the number of those who watched the election campaign ads last week.

Israel: Likud, Labor Leaders Explain 'Victory' in TV Debate

TA2705093896

[FBIS Report] Tel Aviv HA'ARETZ in Hebrew on 27 May in a page A3 report by Yerah Tal notes that yesterday, when asked whether he felt he had won the televised debate against Binyamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister Shim'on Peres "attacked the Likud and Knesset Member Binyamin Netanyahu with even greater vehemence than during the debate itself.

"According to Peres, it was a debate between 'one man who has no policy and one who has a policy. You cannot call 'Arafat a liar and at the same time, say, shake his hand. What kind of rubbish is this? At least [former Likud leader and prime minister] Shamir's remarks had some substance."

The report states that "Labor Party officials expressed satisfaction with Peres' appearance, and the assessments ranged from a draw to a victory for the prime minister." Shim'on Sheves, Labor's publicity campaign chairman, explained that "Netanyahu evaded most of the moderator's questions, whereas Peres answered them, including those posed by Netanyahu.

"Sheves claimed that Netanyahu attempted to frighten the public while Peres imbued viewers with hope." Later on in the report Sheves concludes that "the debate was far more interesting than those held in previous election campaigns. He asserted that "neither of the candidates scored a 'knockout.'" Sheves said: "'Peres' public will continue to support him and Netanyahu's supporters will also continue to back their candidate.'"

The same page of HA'ARETZ carries a report by Nadav Shragay and ITIM on the reactions to the debate inside the Likud camp. The report notes that "Several minutes after the conclusion of the televised debate with Shim'on Peres yesterday, Likud Chairman Binyamin Netanyahu declared: 'I thought we would win the elections even before the debate; however, now, I have absolutely no doubt of our victory.'" Netanyahu added: "'I am very pleased with the debate. I have no doubt that after watching the debate, the public will decide to opt for our path because we gave answers. Mr. Peres tried to be evasive. I think this debate clinched the elections for us."

HA'ARETZ writes: "Likud officials were unanimous yesterday in saying that Netanyahu had 'won by many points' if not by 'a knockout.' This assessment was expressed both in internal discussions and in interviews with the media. Likud officials even claimed that their counterparts in the Labor Party had privately admitted that Netanyahu's appearance was superior to that of Peres — without addressing the content of their remarks — and that it would have been preferable for the Labor Party had the debate not been held."

HA'ARETZ reports that Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert, who helped prepare Netanyahu for the debate, said he received the impression that "Peres' performance 'was lackluster, irritable, unfocused, and revealed the tremendous anxiety he and his colleagues are attempting to conceal.'" "Olmert adds: 'My bottom line is this: Peres came with 50 years of experience to face a man he dismisses as a fashion plate and the debate ends with the other candidate looking and sounding more like a prime minister than the prime minister himself. This was undoubtedly a stinging defeat for Peres."

The report says that "Likud officials complained about the electronic media coverage of the debate. The officials claimed that the result of the debate 'was far from a draw' and said that almost all the journalists who watched it shared their view. 'However, the electronic media correspondents lacked the integrity or perhaps the courage to openly report what they saw, and that's a shame.'"

Israel: Press Reacts to Netanyahu-Peres Debate

TA2705113196

[FBIS Report] In their 27 May editions, all Israeli dailies carry reports, editorials, and commentaries on yesterday's televised debate between Likud Chairman Binyamin Netanyahu and Prime Minister Shim'on Peres.

Amnon Barzilay, in a page A4 report in HA'ARETZ, writes that even in the preparations before the debate, the Labor Party's coaching teams had told Prime Minister Peres that "the chances of defeating Netanyahu

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were slim, that there would be no technical 'knockout' and that although the debate may end in a small victory in points, it would probably end in a draw.

"This assessment was based on Netanyahu's television skills and on the asymmetry between each of the candidates' objectives in the debate. As head of the opposition, Netanyahu wants to assume power. As prime minister, Peres seeks to maintain his standing." Barzilay notes that "in the television studio, each of the candidates pursued the strategy marked out by his campaign staff. Peres continued to radiate hope and project a light at the end of the tunnel despite the terrorist attacks. Netanyahu continued to emphasize the threats and the lack of security which are the result of the government's policy."

Tel Aviv HA'ARETZ, in a commentary by Hana Kim on page A4 entitled: "The Likud's Show Must Go On," writes that Netanyahu arrived for yesterday's debate, "against the background of pitched battle in his own election headquarters between senior Likud officials and the campaign's publicity men, with the former asserting that the Likud's campaign has failed while the latter insist that the campaign is effective.

"Likud Knesset Members [MK's] have admitted there is a problem and have spoken of an impending defeat, but everyone agreed to go on with the show until election day, claiming "voters are drifting toward Netanyahu."

Another commentary on the same page of HA'ARETZ by Ehud Oshri, entitled: "Damaging Rhetoric," states that "Shim'on Peres did not win yesterday, but Binyamin Netanyahu lost. At least from the subjective point of view of a convinced voter. The results of the debate should be examined according to two criteria: content and form. Peres won with regard to the first criterion but lost on the second. He addressed the questions seriously, tried to reply to the point, and did not engage in exaggerated rhetorical stunts (except for demonstratively ignoring his opponent). On the other hand he was not relaxed, appeared angry, occasionally on the defensive, and did not radiate the smiling and relaxed assurance that so becomes him. His severe appearance offset his clear advantage in content and he ended the debate with a mediocre grade.

"From my point of view, Netanyahu lost on both counts. As far as content, his appearance was almost scandalous. He clumsily evaded most questions about his plans and concentrated on attacking his opponent in a manner which occasionally verged on contempt ("please do not tell me stories"). Netanyahu stubbornly repeated his regular campaign slogans and did not even attempt to extricate himself from the jumble of internal contradictions which characterize his statements." Oshri adds that "Netanyahu's major problem is the programmed, digital, unauthentic impression he makes. Yesterday, that impression was stronger than ever."

Tel Aviv MA'ARIV, in a commentary by Sima Qadmon on pages 1 and 2, entitled: "Who Won the Draw," explains that "as far as Netanyahu is concerned, yesterday's debate constituted a victory even before one gram of makeup was put on his face. Netanyahu's achievement is the very fact that the debate was held, not its results." Qadmon writes that throughout the entire campaign, the Labor Party has tried to prevent Netanyahu from being presented as Peres' equal, however "that happened yesterday" at the debate and "Netanyahu milked this accomplishment for all it was worth."

Uri Orbach, writing on page 2 of MA'ARIV in a commentary entitled: "Lacking the Wisdom of the Aged", writes: "Binyamin Netanyahu won. Only after the debate was over, faced with the floating vote, did I understand why the Labor Party tried so hard to avoid holding it. Peres appeared statesmanlike; or, in other words angry, gloomy, and peevish. He could only lose from the whole thing. Like a good member of the Labor Party, he remains convinced that if he tries to ignore his nemesis Netanyahu, people will forget that there is also a Likud candidate."

Television critic Me'ir Schnitzer publishes a piece entitled: "Netanyahu by a Knockout" on page A3 of MA'ARIV. Schnitzer notes that "the atrocious lighting" at the debate worked to the detriment of all the participants but totally "wiped out Peres" who "looked tired and older than he is." Moving on to the debate itself, Schitzer writes that "one can say that Netanyahu is the television victor. Naturally, the opposition chairman attacks and the prime minister goes on the defensive. Netanyahu understood long ago that this kind of dramatic situation permits him to ignore the need to imbue his remarks with any content. Appearance is enough. In other words, Netanyahu's forte is his artistic presence, and as an actor, Netanyahu definitely beat Peres by a knockout.

"For some reason, the prime minister thought he was given the stage to deliver messages yesterday. Therefore, instead of concentrating on the show itself, or in other words reciting chewed-up texts in attractive packaging, Peres preferred to develop ideas. This, of course, is a conceptual error. It is difficult to assume that those watching the debate wanted to be persuaded. It is far more likely that the audience was looking for fun, and Netanyahu supplied the goods."

Tel Aviv HATZOFE carries a page 1 report by Sha'ul Schiff which contends that "In yesterday's television debate, Binyamin Netanyahu beat Shim'on Peres hands down. As opposed to Shim'on Peres' frozen visage and

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cliched text, Netanyahu was very alert, and made full use of his allotted time. All this while responding to the tendentious questions raised by Peres as well as to the relevant ones presented by the moderator.

"Peres appeared tired and unsure of himself as opposed to a very confident appearance by Netanyahu." Noting that Peres failed to rebuff Netanyahu's criticism of the government's security and economic policies, Schiff concludes: "I watched the debate with a group of people of disparate political views and everyone said that Netanyahu won every round.

"It is hard to believe that the debate will change the viewpoints of those on the right, left, or middle; however, when even the most left-wing journalists call the result a draw then it is a bad sign for Peres."

Israel: TV Poll Shows Impact of Debate on Election Support

TA2705184596

[FBIS Report] Both Israeli television networks in Hebrew at 1700 GMT on 27 May carry election-related public opinion polls.

Jerusalem Israel Television Channel 1 Network carries political correspondent Nisim Mish'al's video report on a poll conducted by the Smith Institute on 27 May, which "reflects the impact of the Peres-Netanyahu debate." The following figures were screened simultaneously with Mish'al's report.

— Premiership elections [in percentage points]: Peres — 50; Netanyahu — 47; undecided — 3.

— Knesset elections [in Knesset seats]: Labor 40; Likud 38; Meretz 8; Arab parties 6; NRP [National Religious Party] 8; SHAS [Torah Observing Sephardim] 5; United Torah Jewry 4; Moledet 3; The Third Way 3-4; immigrant party 3-4; undecided 1-2.

Jerusalem Channel 2 Television Network carries Dov Gilhar's video report on a poll conducted "this week," which "does not reflect the impact of the Peres-Netanyahu debate." The figures shown on the screen are as follow:

— Premiership elections [in percentage points]: Peres — 48.3; Netanyahu — 40.8; undecided — 10.9. After analyzing the floating votes, the pollsters reached the following results: Peres — 51.7; Netanyahu — 46.4; undecided — 1.9.

— Knesset elections [in Knesset seats]: Labor 41; Meretz 9-10; Arab parties 6; Likud-Tzomet-Gesher 36-37; Moledet 3; NRP [National Religious Party] 8; United Torah Jewry 3-4; SHAS [Torah Observing Sephardim] 4-5; The Third Way 3; immigrant party 5-6.

Israel: Ba-Gad Withdraws; Darawshah for Peres; Yemin Yisra'el Stays

TA2605111196 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1000 GMT 26 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Knesset Member [MK] Darawshah today called on his supporters to vote for Shim'on Peres. MK Darawshah told our correspondent Yo'el Dar that he was making this call on behalf of his party, although its leaders did not convene to discuss the matter today, as planned.

Yisra'el Ba'aliya, the party headed by Natan Sharansky, announced that it made no decision to recommend either of the premiership candidates to their followers. The statement was issued after Russian-language newspapers published contradictory reports on the party's stand.

Yemin Yisra'el has announced that it will participate in the elections and that it repudiates the attempts to pressure it to withdraw. MK Sha'ul Gutman, one of the Yemin Yisra'el leaders, told our correspondent Gil Litman that an instigation campaign has been conducted against him and his associates. According to him, the pressures grew to the level of threats on the one hand and solicitations on the other.

[Gil Litman's report on Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew at 1005 GMT on 26 May adds that Yemin Yisra'el held a news conference today, at which "speakers admitted that numerous members of the outlawed Kakh and Kahana Hay movements are among the supporters of Sha'ul Gutman's party."

[Litman further reports: "We have just learned that MK Ba-Gad has announced that he is withdrawing from the race. As a result of his and Ahmad al-Tibi's withdrawal, a total of 19 parties are now running in the 14th Knesset elections."]

Israel: Dahaf Poll Shows 3-Percent Peres Lead Over Netanyahu

TA2805070496 Tel Aviv YEDI'OT AHARONOT in Hebrew 28 May 96 p 1

[Public opinion poll conducted by the Dahaf Institute directed by Dr. Mina Tzemah]

[FBIS Translated Text] Question: Were elections to the premiership held today and the candidates were Shim'on Peres and Binyamin Netanyahu, for whom would you vote? (Results quoted in percentage points, with results of previous poll given in brackets)

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Answer: Peres — 51.5 (50.5); Netanyahu — 48.5 (46.5); undecided/did not reply — nil.

Question: Were elections to the Knesset held today, for which party would you vote? (Results quoted in Knesset seats, with results of previous poll given in brackets)

	Forecast seats	Current Knesset
Labor	40 (41)	44
Likud+Tzomet+Gesher	36+ (38)	40
Meretz	9 (9)	12
Moledet	4 (3+)	3
National Religious Party	7 (7)	6
United Torah Jewry	-4 (4)	4
SHAS	5+ (5)	6
HADASH	5 (3+)	3
The Third Way	2 (2)	—
Yisra'el Ba'aliya	-6 (4+)	—
ADP+Islamic Movement	2 (2+)	2 (ADP)

[Key to abbreviations: SHAS [Torah Observing Sephardim] HADASH [Democratic Front for Peace and Equality]; ADP [Arab Democratic Party]

The poll was conducted on 27 May on 1,355 respondents who constitute a representative sample of Israel's adult population. The maximum margin of error is approximately 3 percent.

Israel: Geocartographia Poll Shows Peres With 3-Percent Lead

TA2805071096 Tel Aviv YEDI'OT AHARONOT in Hebrew 28 May 96 p 1

[Public opinion poll conducted by the Geocartographia Institute directed by Professor Avi Degani and Dr. Rina Degani]

[FBIS Translated Text] Question: Were elections to the premiership held today, for whom would you vote? (Results quoted in percentage points, with results of previous poll given in brackets)

Answer: Peres — 51.5 (49.5); Netanyahu — 48.5 (47.1); undecided/did not reply — nil.

Question: Were elections to the Knesset held today, for which party would you vote? (Results quoted in number of Knesset seats, with results of previous poll given in brackets)

	Forecast seats	Current Knesset
Labor	39 (40)	44
Likud+Tzomet+Gesher	32 (-34)	40
Meretz	10 (8+)	12
Moledet	3 (4+)	3
National Religious Party	9 (-8)	6
United Torah Jewry	4 (-4)	4
SHAS	6 (6)	6
HADASH	5 (-5)	3
The Third Way	3 (3+)	—
Yisra'el Ba'aliya	6 (6+)	—
ADP+Islamic Movement	2 (2+)	2 (ADP)

[Key to abbreviations: SHAS [Torah Observing Sephardim] HADASH [Democratic Front for Peace and Equality]; ADP [Arab Democratic Party]

The poll was conducted on 27 May on 1,043 respondents who constitute a representative sample of Israel's adult population. The maximum margin of error is approximately 3 percent.

Israel: Peres Interviewed on Elections

TA2805080896 Tel Aviv HA'ARETZ in Hebrew 28 May 96 p B2

[Interview with Israeli Prime Minister Shim'on Peres by Orit Galili, Yerah Tal, and Amnon Barzilay on 27 May in Peres' office]

[FBIS Translated Text] We came to the prime minister with a series of nagging questions about his perception of the close gap between him and the Likud candidate in the polls, and asked him to comment on the possibility that he might lose to Binyamin Netanyahu tomorrow. Shim'on Peres asked us not to be that skeptical and cynical. I am in excellent spirits, he scolded us; I know what needs to be done in the next four years after we did the impossible in the past four years.

At the end of the interview Peres sought to give credit to Yitzhaq [Rabin]. He spoke in an intimate tone, without giving Yitzhaq a family name. He deserves it, Peres said, and I make it a point of saying as much in every speech because I really think so. It is not a tactical move.

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Since the televised debate with Netanyahu, Peres has been sleeping three hours a day. Early yesterday morning he read the book [Rabin's granddaughter] No'a Ben-Artzi wrote about her grandfather. A nice book, he said. He chose not to reveal to us the dedication she wrote him or the phone calls he got after the debate. He was not home, and it was [wife] Sonia who received the calls. One of them was from Henry Kissinger, another was from Helmut Kohl. "My relations with world state leaders are unprecedented," Peres said. Will this help him tomorrow?

Peres believes that Netanyahu's victory would spell the end of the peace process. We reminded him that people said the same when Menahem Begin was elected. "Truly interesting events happened with Begin," Peres said. "First of all, there was al-Sadat. Now there is no such leader in the offing. Begin had Moshe Dayan, 'Ezer Weizman, and Yiga'el Yadin at his side. That was the trio that surrounded him. Today we know exactly who the trio surrounding the Likud leader is. You cannot compare the two. Moreover, when Begin was elected he did not even conceive of the peace with Egypt. He was lucky to have next to him a man like Dayan, who met with Egyptian presidential adviser al-Tuhami; he had next to him a man like 'Ezer Weizman, and he had Yadin, who brought with him 15 Knesset seats."

It is highly likely that, if elected, the government Peres will form will include Natan Sharansky's immigrant party and the Third Way. He believes they will not shackle him where the continuation of the peace process is concerned. Will he renew the historic alliance with the National Religious Party [NRP]? After analyzing the political establishment as it gets used to the new electoral system, Peres' conclusion is that the traditional political alignments are a thing of the past. "They have lost a great deal of their spirit and substance. Today alliances are based on pragmatic considerations."

[HA'ARETZ] Although your political attitude has always been to meet the religious parties halfway, the Council of Torah Sages yesterday endorsed the Likud candidate. How do you feel about that?

[Peres] There was pressure on the council from the Lithuanian sect. Neither of the two candidates is a rebbe, and yet they came up with such a recommendation. As far as the attitude toward religion, I see no reason they should prefer one candidate over the other. But what difference does it make now? Many religious Israelis will vote for me anyway. Also, there is no way to know how the rabbis will vote personally. For my part, I do not want to rat on them.

[HA'ARETZ] Are you disappointed with them?

[Peres] I am not disappointed. They are the ones who should be disappointed. These were parties that dealt with religious affairs, and have now become parties dabbling in politics. The difference is enormous.

[HA'ARETZ] How did that happen?

[Peres] They switched from religiousness to nationalism. Today they are religious revisionist parties. Instead of uniting the nation they are splitting it.

[HA'ARETZ] Yet you believe NRP and ultra-Orthodox voters will vote for you.

[Peres] Yes.

[HA'ARETZ] Nevertheless, the polls show the gap between you and Netanyahu closing.

[Peres] It has been constant at 4-5 percent. The gap narrowed only because of the four terrorist bombings. Other than that, I am not aware of any accomplishment by Netanyahu. All he did was build a campaign of fear and intimidation. We never did that. As for patriotism, what sort of patriotism is it to tell the world that there are Israelis who want to divide Jerusalem and to tell Israelis that they ought to be afraid? His message is one of fear.

[HA'ARETZ] Perhaps the intimidation campaign succeeded.

[Peres] Who knows?

[HA'ARETZ] How did you feel about the messages voiced by Netanyahu?

[Peres] I sat there and could not believe my ears. A man who has no program proposes a secure peace by not talking to either al- Asad or 'Arafat. He proposes to fight terror by halting the peace process. He said a few other things that astonished me — for instance, that he will not give self-rule to the Palestinians. Doesn't he know that they already have it? This is simply elementary.

[HA'ARETZ] Do you think Hayim Ramon's campaign line was effective?

[Peres] Our strategy was addressed to the undecided voters, and its effectiveness will be judged by the results. I think that as far as the target audience is concerned, the strategy was correct. Of course, some of our people wanted to see more blood, but every election campaign must choose a target audience. I think we hit the target.

[HA'ARETZ] Half the public believes you will divide Jerusalem.

[Peres] Because the country is divided. Many see themselves as part of a certain camp and will therefore justify

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any argument, which is not surprising. It is the same on all issues. What used to be the religious camp is now part of the national camp. Forty percent take such positions on every political issue, including Jerusalem. This is not because of the Likud's propaganda. Therefore, everything I said in the debate, in my opening remarks about Jerusalem, was calculated and planned word for word. You can only pack a few sentences into 90 seconds, and what I said was prepacked, not spontaneous.

[HA'ARETZ] Even if you say that the question of Jerusalem has not come up at all, why won't you admit that you have been examining ideas about a municipal division? After all, there are 160,000 Arabs in the city.

[Peres] We did not discuss the structure of the municipality but the question of whether Jerusalem will or will not be divided, and we said that it will not. Even Clinton and Husayn support our position about the need for a united Jerusalem. The question is whether the city will remain Jerusalem or become Berlin, whether it will be a divided or a united city. Our position on the issue is unequivocal.

[HA'ARETZ] Your position on Jerusalem became clear only after the Likud started its blatant attacks on you.

[Peres] That is simply not correct. As far as Jerusalem is concerned, both Rabin and I were unequivocal. The fact is that we removed Jerusalem from the autonomy. Did Netanyahu do that?

[HA'ARETZ] The Likud put the Jerusalem issue on the agenda after you chose to ignore it at this juncture.

[Peres] They did not raise the question of Jerusalem but a fabrication. They built a lie. To come out and say that parts of the nation want to divide Jerusalem is slanderous to Jerusalem and harmful to the State of Israel. What for? For a couple of votes?

[HA'ARETZ] It looked like you were backed into a corner and had to resort to the phrase "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, may my right hand lose its cunning" to prove your loyalty.

[Peres] The Likud did not back me into anything. In the heat, in the cold, and also now, when Jerusalem has become a hot issue, I have maintained the same positions. If you review my speeches since 1947, you will not find even a hint of doubt about Jerusalem. I am also on record as having said that I believed al-Sadat and Husayn would come to terms with Jerusalem's unity.

[HA'ARETZ] As Yitzhaq Rabin's No. 2 man you displayed more courage with regard to the peace process. Did you stop the moves on the Syrian and Palestinian tracks after Rabin's assassination because of fear of losing the elections?

[Peres] That is not right. After Rabin's assassination I was the one who decided to transfer six cities and 450 villages to the Palestinians. What to do, that Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] and Islamic Jihad interfered in our election campaign, as did Hizballah and Iran? This election campaign contained a political enemy and an ideological rival, and I believe my effort was aimed more at the political enemy than at the ideological rival. Not Bibi Netanyahu, but Iran and the fundamentalists is what really threatened victory in the elections. Until the four bombings I had a lead of 16 percent. After the bombings, if you remember, people thought I would fall. In the three months of the election campaign I had to sustain a hard battle. I had to start everything from scratch but my spirits did not drop. I have no doubt whatsoever that if I had not launched an all-out war on terror I would have lost the elections.

[HA'ARETZ] The Likud scares us with the division of Jerusalem and you scare us with terror?

[Peres] I did not scare anybody with terror attacks. For three months I fought off the attempt to halt the peace process. That was also a battle for peace. In my opinion, it was the toughest battle for peace because if they had won you would not be asking me a question about peace. Everything would be finished.

[HA'ARETZ] When you launched your all-out war on terror, as you put it, you lost your previous courage to promote the peace process. For instance, why didn't you pull out of Hebron?

[Peres] I do not lack courage, neither about one nor about the other. The fact is that I decided to resume the negotiations about the third phase of the Oslo agreement and that there was a meeting in Taba.

[HA'ARETZ] It was a ceremonial session.

[Peres] Ceremonies too are significant here. As for Hebron, I reached an agreement with the Palestinians and they understood exactly what was at stake. Israelis understand exactly what would have happened if, God forbid, Hasan Salamah had staged an attack. They would have said that I had handed back Hebron and that he staged the attack from there.

[HA'ARETZ] If so, terror guided all your moves during the election campaign.

[Peres] There is no doubt at all that terror was the main theme in the election campaign.

[HA'ARETZ] If you lose, you may regret having switched the stress in the election campaign from peace to security.

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[Peres] I was centered on the peace issue 1,000 percent, but in order to win the peace you must strike at terror. Moreover, I have nothing to explain if I lose. It was not the Likud that put the issue of security on the agenda. Hamas did. The four bombings put security on the agenda.

[HA'ARETZ] And you were swept away by it.

[Peres] What do you mean swept away? I had to respond. It was my duty to set out fearlessly against those who were trying to destroy the peace process and also win the elections.

[HA'ARETZ] In order to win you adopted a vague ideological line.

[Peres] Not me. I distinguished between the path of settlements and the path of peace.

[HA'ARETZ] On the other hand you said the settlements would remain where they are.

[Peres] Not all of them under Israeli sovereignty. I said most settlers would remain under Israel's sovereignty. I was very careful with my words.

[HA'ARETZ] But you made a point of stressing that the choice was not between right and left.

[Peres] Definitely not between right and left, because I want those on the right to switch to our side. What do you want me to say? All rightists versus all leftists? Had I done that I would have secured a victory of the minority. There is nothing shameful about winning the elections and I feel no need to apologize. An election campaign undoubtedly has an election strategy, but I did not hold my tongue on any issue.

[HA'ARETZ] Labor abstained from using Rabin's assassination in its campaign, and may have thus missed the most important message: That half a year ago, for the first time, an attempt was made to change the government through a political murder. Did you cave in to the right on this point?

[Peres] It could have been the opposite. People would have said that we were making cynical use of the assassination. Whatever you do, people will always say that you should have acted differently.

[HA'ARETZ] Why did you not air the ad dealing with the assassination, entitled: Not To Give Yig'al 'Amir a Reason To Smile?

[Peres] Because our problem was and remains to attain a majority, and to that end we needed Likud voters to move over to our side. There was apprehension that if the ad were identified with a party we would make it hard on those people to make the switch.

[HA'ARETZ] You pin the narrowing of the gap between yourself and Netanyahu on the bombings. Couldn't it be that you are not a sufficiently electable candidate to win the elections?

[Peres] Do you have some other candidate? What do you want me to tell you? That I am nice, that I am a genius? I reiterate: Labor was hurt by Islamic Jihad, Hizballah, Hamas, and the Iranians. Our 16-percent lead was not reduced by either the Likud's campaign, their American adviser Arthur Finkelstein, or anybody else.

[HA'ARETZ] It sounds like you are preparing yourself an alibi in case you fail.

[Peres] I have no alibi. Don't worry, I will win the elections.

[HA'ARETZ] But you have already lost several election campaigns.

[Peres] I did not lose any election campaign. The party made one mistake and has been paying a heavy price for it since then. I am talking about the brilliant exercise of splitting ways with the NRP in 1976. Until then, the NRP loyally went with us. We made a mistake: We split with it and we lost the majority. The moment we caused the merger between the religious and nationalist camps we had a problem. Therefore, I am neither a loser nor a failure, I am a man who has fearlessly fought all his life. And as far as charisma goes, not all women fall in love with the same man. That is impossible.

[HA'ARETZ] If you win tomorrow the Likud will probably argue that you won thanks to the Arab votes.

[Peres] What does the Likud propose? That we ban Arabs from voting? Extremists and violent people also vote for the Likud. So what? Even Yig'al 'Amir is entitled to vote. If Yig'al Amir can vote — and I suppose he will not vote for me unless with the trigger of a gun — how can others be banned? Should we start looking into the entrails of every single voter? It is a disgrace and a shame for democracy to bar a community because of its nationality. As Jews we have rebelled against this throughout history.

[HA'ARETZ] Will victory give you a mandate to pursue the line you started with Rabin in 1992?

[Peres] One hundred percent. What I propose is a program and it has nothing to do with ego. Also, I am not sure that I have such a big ego.

[HA'ARETZ] Who will you phone first?

[Peres] Two days before the elections I have no intention of talking nonsense.

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[HA'ARETZ] You said you would not serve in a government under Netanyahu. Will you accept him as a cabinet minister in your government?

[Peres] I am not prepared to serve in a government that has bought a car with a single gear: reverse. I will not lend a hand to resuming settlement activities, stopping the peace process, and rekindling the intifadah.

[HA'ARETZ] What is your guess about the outcome?

[Peres] I do not want to guess.

[HA'ARETZ] What will you consider an achievement?

[Peres] One vote more is considered a majority.

[HA'ARETZ] The right could question the legitimacy of a government based on a tiny minority.

[Peres] There is no such thing.

[HA'ARETZ] How is your health?

[Peres] My health is excellent. My grandfather died when he was 96, but perhaps I should not talk about it. It might yet scare and frighten some people.

Israel: Netanyahu Interviewed on Peace Process, Elections

MS2805091896 London THE DAILY TELEGRAPH in English 28 May 96 p 14

[Report on interview with Israeli Likud leader Benjamin by Anton La Guardia Netanyahu in Jerusalem on 27 May: "Netanyahu 'Will Seek To Rekindle Search for Peace'"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Jerusalem — Israel's Likud leader, Benjamin Netanyahu, will call a grand Middle East peace conference to "rekindle" negotiations with Syria and the Palestinians if he is elected prime minister tomorrow, he promised yesterday.

Speaking to THE DAILY TELEGRAPH, Mr Netanyahu tried to reassure the international community that he would not suspend peace negotiations, despite his previous opposition to the Palestinian autonomy agreements.

Opinion polls place the Likud leader a few percentage points behind Shim'on Peres, the Labour Prime Minister. "We are going to win this election," Mr Netanyahu declared.

If he does so, at the age of 46 he will become Israel's youngest prime minister and the first leader to be born after the creation of the Jewish state in 1948.

Asked what his first act would be, Mr Netanyahu said: "I would turn to our neighbours and say 'Let's invigorate the peace process.' I think it is stuck right now. It is going nowhere... I would reconvene the Madrid peace conference."

The 1991 Madrid conference, attended by a Likud government, was the starting point of Israel's peace deals with the Arabs, though it was under Yitzhaq Rabin's Labour government that agreements were reached with the Palestinians and Jordan.

Mr Netanyahu said the hawks in his cabinet, such as Ariel Sharon, the former defence minister, and Rafael Eytan, the former chief-of-staff, would be balanced by Likud doves. "Anyone who joins my government will have to abide by the guidelines of my government, which means that we continue with the peace process, we negotiate with the Palestinians, and we insist that they keep their commitments," he said.

But it is difficult to see how Mr Netanyahu could reach a permanent agreement with Palestinians or other Arabs.

He ruled out the possibility of a Palestinian state or changing the status of Jerusalem as Israel's undivided capital, though he would offer "generous and broad autonomy" that would exclude powers over security and foreign policy.

This amounts to little more than the self-ruling cantons that Palestinians already have. It may even be less; he has promised to restore security to the Israeli army, although he says he does not intend it to return permanently to autonomous Arab cities such as Nablus.

If this does not inflame Palestinian passions, then Mr Netanyahu's plan to expand Jewish settlements in the West Bank almost certainly will. He would not say where he would build nor how many people he wanted to add to the 140,000 settlers already in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. He said only that he would spend much less than the 300 million pounds that Israel hands over yearly to the Palestinian Authority in tax refunds and aid.

"I am a great believer in free markets," he said. "I would rather build the infrastructure and roads, freeing public lands, rather than invest taxpayers' money on construction."

On Hebron Mr Netanyahu said he wanted to establish territorial continuity between the main settlement of Kiryat Arba, on the outskirts, and the small enclaves of hardline settlers in the heart of the city. The army pull-out should be delayed until the end of final-status talks because of the danger of bloodshed.

Mr Netanyahu said he would not give up the Golan Heights, which Israel captured from Syria in 1967. Instead he wants to reach interim agreements, for example on security and water-sharing.

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One idea is for Syria to stop Hizballah's attacks from south Lebanon and to throw out Palestinian militant groups from Damascus in exchange for Syria's removal from the American list of states supporting terrorism. But it seems unlikely that President Assad of Syria would accept such offers.

Referring to Neville Chamberlain's appeasement of Hitler at Munich, Mr Netanyahu said: "Britain understands that that peace does not come at any price. With a dictatorial regime, peace can endure only if it is coupled with security.

"That is a very simple lesson which most Westerners remember very well for themselves, but forget for Israel."

Israel: Shin Bet Head—Higher Security Due to Plans To Harm Peres

TA2605173996 Jerusalem Israel Television Channel 1 Network in Hebrew 1700 GMT 26 May 96

[Announcer-read report]

[FBIS Translated Text] Shin Bet head 'Ami Ayalon disclosed today that the prime minister's bodyguards, operating under Ayalon's instructions, have adopted stringent security procedures in view of additional information about plans to harm the prime minister. Ayalon made the remarks in a letter he sent to the heads of the Journalists Association in Tel Aviv. He was responding to journalists' complaints that the prime minister's bodyguards were behaving violently and in a humiliating fashion against members of the media accompanying Prime Minister Peres.

The Shin Bet head stressed that the bodyguards are working under very trying circumstances. In addition to the heavy work load on the eve of the elections, they have to perform their work in a public atmosphere unaccustomed to the high security level currently required.

Israel: Shin Bet Warned of Plans To Kill Peres on Election Day

TA2805072196 Tel Aviv MA'ARIV in Hebrew 28 May 96 p 2

[Report by Yo'av Limor and Ben Kaspit]

[FBIS Translated Text] Over the past few days, the Shin Bet and the Israel Police have received many warnings of expected attempts to assassinate Prime Minister Shim'on Peres on election day.

The Shin Bet has described these warnings as "hot." In other words, they are well-grounded and have been received from more than one source. Some of the warnings pertain to assassination attempts by Islamic radicals, but the overwhelming majority refer to attempts by extremist right-wing Jews seeking to foil Peres' election as prime minister.

The Shin Bet has therefore decided greatly to increase security around the prime minister. Beginning yesterday, more bodyguards have been added to Peres' entourage and security regulations have been severely tightened.

The level of security will peak on election day. All those present at the places Peres will visit will be thoroughly checked and the roads the prime minister will travel on will be closed. There will also be stringent security at Cinerama Hall in Tel Aviv, where a festive event marking the end of the election campaign will be held.

The Shin Bet and the police have also received warnings of plans to harm other ministers and subsequently bolstered security around them as well. This pertains mainly to Public Security Minister Moshe Shahal, who regularly receives death threats — which have greatly increased recently — from the disciples of 'Uzi Meshulam [self-proclaimed messianic leader of Orthodox Yemenite Jews who claims the government engaged in a cover-up with regard to the disappearance of Yemenite children in the 1950's]. On election day, Binyamin Netanyahu will also be carefully guarded in order to preclude any attempt to disrupt the democratic process in Israel.

A senior Shin Bet official said yesterday: "Our working assumption is that the threat to the prime minister's life grows the closer we approach the elections and will hit a peak on election day."

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Jordan: King Speaks at Independence Day

JN2705062296 Amman Jordan Television Network in Arabic 1547 GMT 26 May 96

[Speech by King Husayn of Jordan at a reception celebrating the 50th anniversary of Jordan's independence at the Prime Ministry gardens in Amman—live]

[FBIS Translated Text] In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate. Brother Abu-'Awn [Jordanian Prime Minister 'Abd-al-Karim al-Kabariti], you spoke on this occasion in the manner of the sincere soldier, the truthful man, and the genuine Jordanian. Thank you for your remarks.

Dear kinsfolk, beloved brothers, comrades on the difficult march, Jordan's men and women, the young blossoms on this dear soil, esteemed people on this land, which is impregnable to dangers and challenges, we congratulate you. On this occasion, we recall the events and challenges of the long march. We recall the beginning of the Great Arab Revolt. We recall the joint work of our fathers and forefathers to realize the aims and targets of the Great Arab Revolt in the great Arab homeland.

We recall the righteous martyrs, the free men, and their stands of heroism and manhood. We recall the vanguards who never compromised their rights, who were never lenient with regard to anything that they felt could harm the nation's rights and future.

We recall the founder, our grandfather, and recall his struggle and life as a soldier in the Great Arab Revolt. We recall his history with his kinsfolk and his great and united family in this country and in the greater Arab homeland. We recall his hopes and experience, his appeals for the unity of the greater Arab homeland. He was fought whenever he tried to do something for this nation, but he continued nevertheless with determination and manhood-traits he inherited from his fathers and forefathers, the Hashemite family, his father, the martyr of Palestine and the Arabs, the martyr of unity and freedom, the father of the Great Arab Revolt, Husayn Bin-'Ali.

With his struggle, he wrote a new page in the history of this nation, in sincerity and truthfulness. He fell as a martyr at the entrance to al-Aqsa Mosque in Palestine — whose people's rights he defended — in Jerusalem and on the Palestinian soil, which the Arab Legion [the Jordanian Army] liberated and saved. This legion received the banner from the army of the Great Arab Revolt. As God willed, he left to us the task of continuing and working steadfastly on this land, giving it our love and sweat, giving it our blood to defend it, always planting the best seeds. He gave us pride in Arabism, in citizenship, so that this country will always remain an immovable rock in the face of storms. So that it will remain true and Arab and live in our hearts and consciences at all times and in all circumstances.

Jordan has been transformed into a homeland for immigrants [Palestinian refugees] and supporters [the Jordanian people] in this age and during our journey. On this occasion, I would like to reiterate our strong determination to preserve this national unity, our pride in belonging to a single one family, our determination to make sacrifices, and to always to make of this land a model and a good example to others in this part of the world and everywhere.

I know that some believe that we will not meet the required level due to limited resources and difficult circumstances. What is important, however, is not material resources but the hearts and consciences. The important thing is our awareness and determination to work and make sacrifices, in faith, sincerity, and truthfulness, in the experience that we have gained so far—experience that made of Jordan a land of true men whose heads are held high and do not bow under any circumstances except for almighty God. [applause]

We will work and say: Work righteousness: soon will Allah observe your work, and his messenger, and the believers [Koranic verse]. But the picture cannot be changed overnight, nor within a short period of time. Inevitably, however, it will change to the better. With sincerity, truthfulness, resolve, determination, and absolute confidence, we will inevitably reach all our objectives and aims. In 50 years, we have achieved a great deal. Fifty years ago, I recall the occasion of independence and the joy in our beloved Amman, then a small town. I recall the military parade of the Arab Legion, then a small group of loyal, faithful men. I recall my martyr grandfather, may God have mercy on his soul, and his advice to me to do my best in this life to be worthy of the love and trust of the people of this land and nation. He advised me to continue to build on what he had built and not to surrender to despair for one moment in my life. I promised to do so.

Our new government has been in office a hundred days. Taking into account its responsibilities and our present and future aspirations, this is a very short period of time in history. It will build on the last 50 years. With the help of God, its work will be proficient and good. With little patience and a great deal of resolve, determination, and self-confidence, we will inevitably arrive at all our objectives and aims, God willing.

I am proud of my tours of this world. A great deal of our struggle is to defend our rights, win friends, and present Jordan's image to others in this vast world. I

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am proud of what I see and hear from others about this country, in terms of respect, appreciation, and love. Actually, all this makes this country much bigger in the hearts of people everywhere than the size of its land and population. I pray that this country will be great in the hearts and minds of all Jordanians and under all circumstances, too.

Shura and democracy are the course we have chosen and the path we have followed to give every Jordanian man and woman the right and opportunity to work and achieve all of their aspirations and objectives, maintain everyone's dignity under all circumstances, and live a life of love, sincerity, faithfulness, cooperation, and a serious, sincere search for all that will enable us to achieve more with a spirit of brotherhood and responsibility.

God willing, we will always frustrate the pessimists, skeptics, hopeless, and those who cast doubt on the ability of this country and its people to offer and maintain a shining image of the Arabs and Arabism in the great Arab homeland. [applause] Proceed with God's blessings.

My greetings to our soldiers in their trenches and camps. [applause] My love, appreciation, and gratitude for the security men, who work vigilantly to keep the trust and fulfill their duty toward our good people, to whom one is proud to belong, and toward this single great family throughout the homeland, in Amman and other cities, the north, south, and center, in the villages, the desert, and the Jordan Valley. Congratulations. Many happy returns to you and to the homeland. The march is serious and purposeful.

We, the Hashemites, are from you and for you under all circumstances. [applause] This is my brother, my trusted crown prince, my great hope. [applause] These young men are from the Hashemite clan. This is my prime minister and first minister. This is the government. You are the deputies, senators, and men of this country. This is Jordan. Proceed with God's blessings and care. From God we seek support. Peace and blessings be upon you [applause].

Jordan: King Reportedly Changes Plan on Anniversary Speech

JN2705103196 Amman AL-BILAD in Arabic
29 May 96 p 1

[FBIS Translated Text] While the JORDANIAN NEWS AGENCY, PETRA was preparing to transmit the speech His Majesty King Husayn was to deliver at the ceremony at the Prime Ministry to mark the 50th independence anniversary, a Royal Court official phoned PETRA and asked it to stop transmission of the speech after the King decided not to deliver the written speech that was prepared for the occasion, and to deliver an impromptu speech instead.

The speech, which was supposed to tackle Jordan's relations and other sensitive issues, turned out to be a routine speech devoid of any surprises, contrary to what was expected. The speech also did not touch on Jordan's foreign relations, particularly with Iraq. The speech merely celebrated independence day and recalled the achievements scored over the past 50 years.

Jordan: Kuwaiti Amir, Iraq's Saddam Cable King on National Day

JN2605121696 Amman AL-RA'Y in Arabic
25 May 96 p 20

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] On the occasion of Jordan's 50th Independence Day, His Majesty King Husayn received congratulatory cables from their majesties, their excellencies, and their highnesses the kings, presidents, and amirs of sisterly Arab and Islamic countries, as well as friendly countries. The cables congratulate the king on this dear national occasion, asking Almighty God to keep his majesty the king in good health and to grant him a long life. The cables also express hope that the Jordanian people will continue the march of construction and prosperity under the wise Hashemite leadership. [passage omitted]

His majesty the king received cables from His Majesty King Hassan II of Morocco, His Majesty Sultan Qabus Bin-Sa'id of Oman, His Excellency President Muhammad Husni Mubarak of Egypt, His Excellency President Saddam Husayn of Iraq, His Excellency President 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih of Yemen, His Excellency President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali of Tunisia, His Excellency President 'Umar Hasan al-Bashir of Sudan, His Excellency President Ilyas al-Hirawi of Lebanon, His Excellency Liamine Zeroual of Algeria, His Highness Shaykh Zayid Bin-Sultan Al Nuhayyan of the United Arab Emirates, His Highness Shaykh Jabir al-Ahmad al-Jabir al-Sabah of Kuwait, Shaykh Hamad Bin- Khalifah Al Thani of Qatar, and His Excellency Yasir 'Arafat, chairman of the Palestinian National Authority. [passage omitted]

Jordan: Iraq's 'Aziz Reportedly To Visit 'Within Next Few Days'

JN2505104896 Amman AL-RA'Y in Arabic
25 May 96 p 21

[FBIS Translated Text] Doha—QNA—The Qatari newspaper AL-SHARQ quoted informed sources as saying that Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq 'Aziz is expected to visit Jordan within the next few days.

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The sources say that "this visit aims at assessing relations between the two countries."

Jordan: Source Denies Reports on Iraq's 'Aziz To Visit Jordan

NC2705120996 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1130 GMT 27 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Amman, 27 May (MENA)—A responsible Jordanian source has stated that there are no arrangements for a visit to Jordan by Deputy Iraqi Prime Minister Tariq 'Aziz.

In a statement to MENA's correspondent in Amman, the source denied that 'Aziz is scheduled to visit Jordan soon.

Press reports said 'Aziz would visit Jordan soon to discuss Jordanian-Iraqi relations.

Jordan: Irbid Judge Escapes Assassination Attempt

JN2705201496 Amman AL-RA'Y in Arabic 27 May 96 p 27

[Unattributed report]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Irbid—Judge Muhammad Falih al-Shar'ah, president of the Irbid Court of First Instance, escaped an assassination attempt at dawn yesterday. The incident took place as al-Shar'ah was leaving the house of a relative in the Eastern Quarter in Irbid, to the West of the Officers' Housing. [passage omitted]

Sources close to al-Shar'ah said that he received death threats from unknown persons. However he did not expect the threats to be carried out. The security agencies assumed investigations into the incident, while a search for the culprits is still underway.

[SYRIAN ARAB NEWS AGENCY, SANA, at 1330 GMT on 27 May reports on the above story saying that Muhammad al-Shar'ah "is the judge who issued the first-instance three-year imprisonment verdict on Layth Shubaylat, president of the Jordanian Engineers Union, on charges of slandering King Husayn and the Jordanian royal family in his lectures." SANA cites Jordanian Information Minister Marwan al-Mu'ashshir as saying in his weekly meeting with reporters today: "We do not know if the incident has anything to do with Shubaylat's case, or if it is part of settling personal disputes."]

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Lebanon: 'Resistance' Reports Clash With Israeli Forces

NC2505170496 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 1530 GMT 25 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Israeli acts of aggression that began in the morning and continued until afternoon included artillery and machine-gun fire against the woods of Sujud, al-Rayhan, the Habbush River basin, the al-Litani River, Nab' al-Tasah, and al-Jabal al-Rafi'. The fire originated from the occupation forces' positions in al-Zaffatah and Sujud.

The resistance said that at 1400 [1100 GMT] today it confronted a mechanized Israeli force that tried to advance toward the 'Uqmata plain on the (Ksar al-'Urush) axis. The resistance added that clashes involving all calibers of machine guns and rockets ensued.

The statement said that many casualties occurred among the occupation forces' personnel who covered their withdrawal by shelling the scene of the clashes. Security sources said about 50 shells landed in the area.

Elsewhere, Lahd's forces [South Lebanese Army] said an unspecified number of the Mudawwar family's members were wounded and taken to hospitals when an explosive charge went off as their truck passed on a road leading to Jazzin. Security sources said the explosion took place on the Kurum al-Arz Road adjacent to the hills of Iqlim al-Tuffah.

AFP said all three hospitals inside the occupied area in Jazzin, Marj 'Uyun, and Bint Jubayl denied they received any injured people in a contact with the agency.

Hizballah's Deputy Secretary General Na'im Qasim said the April understanding was a phase of victory, not a conclusion. He criticized those who show allegiance to the resistance, but when there is action show neutrality and do not support it.

Lebanon: Israeli Patrol Comes Under Fire in South

NC2505140096 Kafr Killa Voice of the South in Arabic 1330 GMT 25 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] An Israeli patrol on one of the roads in the eastern sector of the border area came under fire from terrorists, but there were no casualties. The Israeli soldiers immediately returned fire.

The terrorists once again violated the April understanding and carried out an attack on civilians in the Jazzin area.

While Hasan Nasrallah, the secretary general of the terrorist Hizballah organization, was claiming in a radio interview that his terrorists do not attack civilians, an explosive device planted by the terrorists went off on one of the roads in the Jazzin area as a civilian pick-up truck carrying members of the Mudawwar family was passing by. The family members were injured and taken to the hospital for treatment.

Lebanon: Israelis Shell Southern Areas; Car Bomb Injures 2

NC2505120596 Beirut Voice of Lebanon in Arabic 1115 GMT 25 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Israeli forces shelled The hills of Iqlim al-Tuffah, al-Jabal al-Rafi', 'Uqmata, and Sujud before noon today. The Iqlim al-Tuffah hills — namely al-Jabal al-Akhdar, the woods of Sujud, al-Rayhan, and the Nab' al-Tasah basin — have been under intermittent artillery bombardment since 1330 [1030 GMT] today. The bombardment is originating from the Israeli forces' positions in al-Zaffatah.

Elsewhere: An explosive charge went off in a civilian car on the 'Ayn Majdalayn Road in Jazzin before noon today. The explosion wounded two civilians. They were taken to the Jazzin public hospital.

Lebanon: Shelling Reported; Israel Said Seeking To Replace Lahd

NC2505053996 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 0430 GMT 25 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Israel continues its acts of aggression against south Lebanon and western al-Biqa'. In the past few hours, Israeli artillery bombarded several villages in the western al-Biqa', particularly al-Jabbur hills, Abu Rashid, al-Surayri, and Jabal al-Qatranah. The enemy also directed machine gun fire at Jabal al-Dahr and the outskirts of Qilya. Israeli military aircraft flew over the south.

In the meantime, the Israeli forces snatched Hasan Ghusn, a member of the Public Security from the town of al-Khiyam, and have taken him to the town's prison.

THE NATIONAL NEWS AGENCY said the Israeli forces are seeking to replace agent Antoine Lahd [South Lebanese Army commander], after various sector commanders — such as agent 'Aql Hashim — began to disobey his orders.

Lebanon: 'Terrorists' Fire at IDF Patrol; No Damage

TA2505141196 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1400 GMT 25 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] This afternoon in south Lebanon, terrorists fired mortars and automatic weapons at an IDF [Israel Defense Forces] patrol in the eastern sector of the security zone. No one was

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hurt and no damage was caused. Our correspondent Ilan Ro'e reports that IDF and SLA [South Lebanese Army] soldiers returned fire.

Lebanon: Fadlallah Praises Iran During Friday Prayers

LD2405175796 Tehran IRNA in English 1738 GMT 24 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Beirut, May 24, IRNA — The prominent Lebanese alim, al-'Allamah Sayyid Muhammad-Husayn Fadlallah in his Friday prayer sermons, held at al-Hasanayn mosque in southern Beirut, condemned the continued U.S. propagatory-political attacks against Iran.

He added that Washington's hostile attitude towards the Islamic Republic stems from Iran's determination to give support to the Palestinian struggles against the Zionist regime.

Praising the stance adopted by the supreme leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah 'Ali Khamene'i, the 'Allamah described the leadership of Ayatollah Khamene'i as a divine blessing for the world Muslims.

As long as Iran enjoys leadership of Ayatollah Khamene'i, the U.S. and Zionist regime will never be able to alter Iran's policy, he emphasized.

The alim also said that Iran has achieved an outstanding status among other Muslim nations, adding despite the U.S. pressure Iran has not changed its principal policies aiming at giving support to the nations, the Palestinians in particular, in their struggle to attain their goals and aspirations.

Al-'Allamah Fadlallah concluded by inviting all Arab and Muslim nations to support Iran's stance in campaign against the global arrogance and Zionism.

Lebanon: Shiite Cleric Denounces Killing of French Monks in Algeria

NC2405171996 Beirut Voice of Lebanon in Arabic 1615 GMT 24 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Shaykh Muhammad Mahdi Shams-al-Din, chairman of the Higher Islamic Shiite Council, denounced the killing of seven French monks in Algeria. He explained that this action runs counter to Islamic teachings and human values, and harms the nation's interests.

Lebanon: New Group Threatens To Retaliate for Bomber's Extradition

NC2705143596 Kafr Killa Voice of the South in Arabic 1330 GMT 27 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] In a statement distributed in Beirut, an organization calling itself the Arabs' Eagles [Nusur al-'Arab] has warned that the extradition of defendant Yasir al-Shuraydi to the German authorities will not go unpunished. It should be recalled that the Lebanese judiciary agreed to extradite al-Shuraydi to Germany last week.

Lebanon: Fadlallah Says U.S. Wants Israeli Role in Reconstruction

NC2705091696 Beirut Voice of Lebanon in Arabic 0815 GMT 27 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] 'Allamah Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah has delivered a speech at the Imam al-Rida Mosque in Bi'r al-'Abid in Beirut in which he said that Lebanon is living on borrowed time. He added: The United States continues to prevent any vital aid from reaching Lebanon and links any aid to Lebanon, even European and Arab aid, with reconciliation with Israel. He noted that the United States wants Israel to play a role in rebuilding Lebanon. He said he believes the political reality in Lebanon revolves in an empty circle. He added: Things move on the basis of the lost political vitality that governs every issue in the country. He said: Political life is still missing from this country. There are political arguments, discussions, and polarization, but there is no political life through which the people can feel capable of changing their reality or holding a useful dialogue. We want the Lebanese people, Fadlallah said, Christians and Muslims, to reject such a situation.

Lebanon: Nasrallah on Relations With al-Hariri, Israel, Apr Understanding

NC2505102996 Beirut Voice of Lebanon in Arabic 0915 GMT 25 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Hizballah Secretary General Shaykh Hasan Nasrallah said his ties with Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri are not very good and that he does not know how these ties will be in the future. He called on the government to back those who are steadfast, support the resistance and speak of it with pride, and deal with it as a source of strength and not as a problem.

Nasrallah said that Syria and the resistance are on one front, but in keeping with its principles, Iran, which is thousands of kilometers away, supports the resistance. He said that even though we have great esteem for Syria and Iran, which always stand by Lebanon, we are not tools in their hands.

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Nasrallah said the April understanding will not lead to a total cease-fire. He noted that he thinks the Americans and the Israelis want to use this understanding as a springboard to halt the resistance operations. He said that this understanding restricts both parties — the occupying Israeli army and the resistance — in a certain way. However, the restrictions outlined in the understanding are in the interest of civilians; consequently, they are considered a plus rather than a minus. He said the April understanding does not obstruct the resistance's freedom of movement, nor contradicts its right to resist the occupation and liberate the land. He said the enemy has no right to retaliate or defend itself because it is an occupying force. He noted that Hizballah does not have a monopoly on resistance, saying that the south is an open arena for resistance, to everyone.

Discussing the election law, he said: We will participate in the elections and will not boycott them whatever the new election law. He said it is better to form a neutral government.

Regarding Hizballah officials' visits to Bkirki [seat of the Maronite Church], Nasrallah said there is an ongoing dialogue between the two parties to find common denominators. He stressed that Hizballah is still opposed to the government's policy, but not to individuals.

Lebanon: Al-Hariri Returns After Talks With Khaddam in Damascus

NC2605170396 Beirut Voice of Lebanon in Arabic 1615 GMT 26 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri today held talks in Damascus with Syrian Vice President 'Abd-al-Halim Khaddam. The talks dealt with regional affairs and the Washington meeting [of the cease-fire monitoring committee]. Al-Hariri returned to Lebanon tonight after stopping over in Shtawrah for a meeting with Defense Minister Muhsin Dallul. Al-Hariri will leave for Brussels tomorrow for talks with European Union officials.

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Syria: Al-Shar' Receives Qaddumi, Discusses Peres-Netanyahu Debate

JN2705180896 Damascus Syrian Arab Television Network in Arabic 1730 GMT 27 May 96

[Announcer-read report over video]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shar' received Faruq Qaddumi, head of the PLO Political Department, this afternoon. [passage omitted]

The talks dealt with developments in the Arab arena, particularly developments in the Palestinian arena, in addition to the peace process. Following the meeting, the foreign minister answered questions posed by a SANA correspondent:

Question: What is your comment on the stands of the Labor and Likud Parties in the wake of yesterday's debate between Peres and Netanyahu?

Answer: The best thing is not to make any comments now.

Question: But, what do you see in the stands presented in the debate, particularly with regard to the stand of the Likud vis-a-vis the Golan?

Answer: The one who claims that peace and security can be achieved while keeping the Golan and the other occupied Arab territories is an advocate of war, not peace. The adoption of such a policy will certainly destroy peace opportunities in the region. No Arab citizen in any place can deal with such a policy.

Question: Have you seen any difference between the stands of Peres and Likud on Jerusalem?

Answer: I do not see any difference between the two stands. [video clip shows al-Shar' and Qaddumi talking in the presence of the members of both delegations; no video of al-Shar' speaking to SANA correspondent]

Syria: AL-THAWRAH Sees 'No Difference' Between Peres, Netanyahu

JN2605135896 Damascus SANA in Arabic 0720 GMT 26 May 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Damascus, 26 May (SANA) — [passage omitted] Regarding the 29 May Israeli elections, the newspaper AL-THAWRAH says: It does not matter who wins these elections. This issue is of no concern to us. What we are concerned about is the peace process, which is now at an abrupt and serious turning point and faces a difficult dilemma caused by the two major parties vying for power — Labor and Likud.

In a commentary, the paper says: Wagering on Peres or Netanyahu, whose electoral platforms include no mention of peace, is a losing bet and a way to fool oneself, especially since all the statements by the two men on a settlement and peace are merely empty talk and void of substance. Their statements are part of their electoral propaganda that seeks to mislead others, make gains at the polls, and improve the image of Israel, which was strongly shaken following the latest barbaric aggression against Lebanon.

The paper asserts: There is no difference between the Labor Party of Peres and the Likud Party of Netanyahu. The elections will not come up with anything new or depart from the well-known Israeli policy toward peace and its requirements. Ending the current stalemate in the peace process will prove to be highly difficult and complicated, if things continue to depend on the mood and the whims of the Tel Aviv rulers and if the U.S. sponsor and partner does not use its influence to accomplish a just and comprehensive peace and depart from its bias toward Israel's policy.

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Afghanistan

Afghanistan: Rabbani, Hekmatyar Sign Peace Accord

LD2405173596 Kabul Radio Afghanistan Network in Pashto 1530 GMT 24 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] In order to restore and strengthen peace in the country and in order to create a central core to attract all relevant parties and around which they can be encouraged to take part in the political process, an accord was signed today, Friday [24 May], between esteemed Professor Borhanoddin Rabbani, president of the Islamic State of Afghanistan, and esteemed Engineer Golboddin Hekmatyar, amir of the Hezb-e Eslami [Islamic Party] of Afghanistan.

The signing ceremony was attended by esteemed Professor 'Abdorrab Rasul Sayyaf, amir of the Ettehad-e Eslami [Islamic Union] of Afghanistan, esteemed Ahmad Shah Mas'ud, member of the High State Council, and delegations from both sides.

The presidency's press office reported that this accord, which was finally signed by both sides with full confidence after a series of meetings, contacts, and detailed negotiations, demonstrates the fact that the continuation of (?talks) between the relevant parties is the only way of reaching understanding and finding a solution to the difficulties and misunderstandings.

Following this accord, inter-Afghan meetings and talks will continue. This accord will remove misunderstandings and tensions and will restore peace and security in the country. As a result, our compatriots will be able to live in a confident and peaceful atmosphere.

The signing of today's accord indicates that the Afghans can, in sensitive moments of their history, take firm and practical steps to resolve their problems.

The peace accord which was signed today contains the following points:

1. To end the current fighting and to restore a nationwide peace in the country.

2. To prepare the ground for laying the foundation for a genuine Islamic order.

3. Both sides have reached an understanding to set up, together with other parties, a provisional government acceptable to all, as soon as possible.

4. To hold elections and to set up an elected government in line with the restoration of peace and security in the country and on the basis of Islamic principles.

5. To take joint actions to consolidate national unity, to prevent the country's disintegration and to confront all conspiracies designed to continue the fighting in Afghanistan and to bring about the disintegration of the country.

6. To establish a national and Islamic army and national and Islamic security forces in the whole country.

Afghanistan: High State Council Praises Rabbani-Hekmatyar Accord

LD2505211996 Kabul Radio Afghanistan Network in Pashto 1530 GMT 25 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The High State Council described the accord signed by the esteemed Prof Borhanoddin Rabbani, the president of the Islamic State of Afghanistan, and the esteemed Engineer Hekmatyar, the amir of Hezb-e Eslami-ye Afghanistan [Islamic Party of Afghanistan], as an important step towards the ensuring of complete peace in the country. The secretariat of the High State Council reported to BAKHTAR that during the session, held under the chairmanship of the esteemed Professor Borhanoddin Rabbani, information was given on the government-Hezb-e Eslami accord. After discussing the matter comprehensively, the High State Council assessed the accord as a stable foundation for the restoration of peace in the country.

The session insisted that the current situation necessitated coordination and joint efforts by all involved forces, parties, and groups. The safeguarding of national unity, the defense of the lofty values of the Islamic revolution, and joint efforts for the reconstruction of Afghanistan as well as the neutralization of all kinds of conspiracies against the national sovereignty and territorial integrity of our country are such important historic duties for the realization of which all forces should act in a united way.

It was said during the session: the accord between the esteemed Professor Borhanoddin Rabbani and the esteemed Engineer Hekmatyar will establish a powerful center for bringing together all peace-loving forces. The accord will end fighting and hostility and will restore peace and security in our war-stricken country.

During the session, the High State Council considered talks and negotiations with all parties and forces useful and requested that they should continue.

Because a strong foundation has been laid to attract all peace- loving forces and because now more than ever there exist the conditions to end hostility and clashes, the High State Council calls on all peace-loving forces to continue the intra-Afghan talks to achieve a national understanding for the sake of the high national interest and the safeguarding of the Islamic revolution values, it was asserted. The High State Council believes that continued insistence on military aspects and fighting

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are not sensible ways of resolving problems. The continuation of fighting will produce no result but the further destruction of the country.

In view of the pivot established by signing the accord with Hezb- e Eslami, the High State Council considers talks with all peace- loving forces in the interest of the people, peace and the Islamic revolution.

A number of other issues were also discussed in the High State Council session and due decisions were made in connection with every item on the agenda.

Bangladesh

Bangladesh: Government Issues Statement Concerning Army Rebellion

BK2505130896 Dhaka Radio Bangladesh Network in Bengali 1200 GMT 25 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The government has called upon all concerned to refrain from making any comments on the recent incidents that took place in the Bangladesh Army without using proper judgment or analysis. In a statement issued in Dhaka last night, the government expressed grave concern over the misleading and provocative reports being provided by various quarters centering on the legal action taken by the president following the undesirable incidents that took place in the Army on the 20 May. The statement added that these misleading and provocative reports appear to have ulterior motives. The statement gave details of the abortive coup attempt made by a group of senior Army officials and added that it has been possible to save the country from a severe situation due to the timely action taken by the president.

The president ordered compulsory retirement for two senior Army officers for indulging in unlawful activities within the Armed Forces, but Lieutenant General Nasim, the former Army chief, did not comply with the president's order. On the contrary, Gen. Nasim directed the brigade commands loyal to him to march toward Dhaka. The statement said that these types of activities are absolutely illegal and tantamount to rebellion.

[Hong Kong AFP in English at 1245 GMT on 25 May reports on the government's statement. AFP says: "The Bangladesh government has warned against attempts to divide the army between those who fought in the 1971 war of independence war and those who entered the armed forces afterwards. [no closing quotation marks as received]

"In a lengthy statement issued late Friday, the defence ministry said 'despite the fact that no apparent division is visible in the army, some sections, outside the military, frequently try to drum up issues about freedom fighters with ill intention.'

"It did not elaborate on who was doing this, but added that 'it is not desirable ... it can disrupt the army's normal skill and tarnish its image.'

"It added that the modern army had grown out of the forces who fought for independence and had forged an honourable and proud reputation for itself.

"'But army personnel who later joined the Bangladesh army after being repatriated from Pakistan are also proud members of the forces,' the statement said.

"'The Bangladesh government would like to state in clear terms that out of the army's seven divisions, six are headed by freedom fighters,' as well as the critical Defence Forces Intelligence, it said."

AFP adds: "It was not clear why the government issued the statement, although sacked army chief Lieutenant General Abu Saleh Muhammad Nasim and others detained along with him are 'freedom fighters,' while the new army chief Major General Muhammad Mahbubur Rahman was repatriated."]

Bangladesh: Chief Adviser Warns Against Attempts To Disrupt Situation

BK2605093396 Dhaka Radio Bangladesh Network in Bengali 0100 GMT 26 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Chief Adviser Mohammad Habibur Rahman warned in clear terms that the government will not allow any evil designs to disrupt the existing normal situation in the country. He said such an act will be sternly dealt with. The chief adviser was inaugurating a two-day national-level program to observe the 97th birth anniversary of national poet, Kazi Nazrul Islam, at the Shilpakala Academy in Dhaka yesterday. He said the present caretaker government holds overall authority in the republic, and no one has the right to speak on behalf of the government, other than the government itself. Mr. Rahman said all the centers of constitutional power and all branches are to discharge their constitutional responsibilities in their respective fields. He said his government will tackle the situation through a (?single coordinated) effort, and there will be no scope for any misunderstandings.

The chief adviser said that the government is continuing its efforts as per its earlier pledge to transfer power through the holding of elections. He urged those who have been creating a delicate situation to refrain for the sake of Allah. Now, their responsibility is to shun all kinds of [word indistinct] in the country. Mr. Rahman called for patience to help the nation achieve its [words indistinct] goal. He referred to the cooperation offered him by major political parties of the country prior to the installation of the present government. He expressed

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his firm belief that those who made pledges would not violate them. Referring to the great humanitarian national poet, Kazi Nazrul Islam, the chief adviser called upon all to work unitedly, despite differing opinions, for the establishment of a peaceful atmosphere.

Bangladesh: Gen. Rahman To Head Military Court Investigating Revolt

BK2705150196 Hong Kong AFP in English 1352 GMT 27 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Dhaka, May 27 (AFP) — Army tanks guarding Bangladesh's army headquarters were withdrawn Monday and sent to nearby installations, one week after an abortive military revolt, defence sources said.

Meanwhile, the Defence Ministry sources said Monday [27 May] that a "high-powered" military court of enquiry, set up to investigate the revolt, is to be headed by Major General Matiur Rahman, who has also been named the new chief of the Mymensingh division.

Other members of the five-member court all hold ranks of brigadiers, the Defence Ministry said.

Defence sources said the tanks were withdrawn after the army chief, Major General Muhammad Mahbubur Rahman, toured the troubled Bogra and Mymensingh barracks, in northern Bangladesh, during the past two days.

Witnesses said the number of tanks positioned at the Dhaka cantonment barracks was the most seen in any coup attempt since the first putsch in 1975.

The army headquarters, home of Rahman and where sacked army chief Lieutenant General Abu Saleh Muhammad Nasim is detained, was under guard by about a dozen tanks, the witnesses said.

Entry to the area was also relaxed.

The army chief held meetings with his officers and troops Monday in "Darbars," or open sessions, explaining the actions of the rebel leaders as well as praising action taken by troops loyal to government, the sources said.

He flew to Bogra and Mymensingh cantonments, the scene of major revolts May 20, on Sunday and told the troops "you must take a renewed vow to uphold the sanctity of the Constitution and place national interest above everything."

Nasim is accused of staging an abortive revolt on May 20, defying orders by President Abdur Rahman Biswas to force the retirement of two senior army officers.

Biswas is also the defence minister and commander in chief of the armed forces.

India

India: Gowda Stakes Claim To Form Government

BK2805090196 Delhi Doordarshan Television Network in English 0845 GMT 28 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The prime ministerial candidate of the United Front, Mr. H.D. Deve Gowda, is seeking an appointment with the president to stake his claim to form the government. He spoke to our correspondent Bharat Bhushan a short while ago:

[Begin recording] [Gowda] I cannot now come to a conclusion. I can only submit the list of the members who pledged their support to the United Front — over 192 members, and they have elected me as the leader. Only that portion of work I have to do, that is all. The rest of the things will have to be decided.

[Bhushan] But you will also stake a formal claim to form the government?

[Gowda] True. It is for the president to make a decision. The claim is there, that is why the leadership ... [pauses] the Third Front has taken a decision and elected me as the leader. [end recording]

India: PM Admits Lack of Support To Win Confidence Vote

BK2805084396 Delhi Doordarshan Television Network in Hindi 0835 GMT 28 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee has admitted that he does not enjoy the support needed to win the confidence vote in the Lok Sabha. He was talking to some people who called on him at his residence this morning.

[Begin Vajpayee recording] The voting will take place in the Lok Sabha tonight. Debate has been continuing in the house since yesterday. The trial of strength is scheduled for today. It appears that the numbers inside the Lok Sabha of those who are with us are not enough. [end recording]

India: Vajpayee Comments on Vote of Confidence

BK2605104896 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 0830 GMT 26 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The prime minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, has reiterated that his government will not resort to unfair methods to remain in power at the center. He was speaking to newspersons at Raja Sansi airport in Amritsar today. About seeking a vote of

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confidence in the Lok Sabha, the prime minister said the government is hoping for the best and is prepared for the worst. He said his party has approached regional parties to judge the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] government on its pronounced policies and programs and supports it.

Criticizing the United Front and Congress, Mr. Vajpayee alleged that threatened by BJP's crusade against corruption and criminalization of politics, these parties are joining hands in an unholy alliance to nullify the people's mandate given in favor of the BJP. Referring to the June 1984 Operation Blue Star, the prime minister said it is better to forget and forgive such unfortunate happenings. Earlier, Mr. Vajpayee paid obeisance at the Golden Temple and Durgiana Mandir [Temple]. He also visited Jalianwala Bagh and paid homage to the martyrs.

The BJP president, Mr. L.K. Advani, has said that his party is ready for any eventuality in tomorrow's confidence motion in the Lok Sabha. In an interview to a private TV channel, he said his party will not indulge in horse trading to stay in power.

India: Campaign To Get Rid of Rao in Congress Snowballing

BK2705155796 Delhi BUSINESS STANDARD in English 27 May 96 p 1

[Unattributed report]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] An expanded ginger group of senior Congress leaders, which met on Saturday [25 May], plans to requisition an AICC [All India Congress Committee] meeting if P.V. Narasimha Rao does not agree to give up the presidentship of the party. They want those who have left the party to start the Tiwari Congress, the Tamil Maanila Congress and other such groups to return to the fold once Rao is out of the way.

They decided, however, not to press the demand for Rao to quit until after the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] government has been defeated and a new government installed.

They also spoke of ensuring that elections for another Lok Sabha should not be allowed for another two years, during which they could strengthen the Congress.

The group, which met over dinner at AICC General Secretary Ahmed Patel's residence, spoke of asking Rao to quit at another CWC [Congress Working Committee] meeting after the change of government has taken place and of returning to their states to garner support for an AICC requisition in order to elect a new leader.

They were unwilling to wait until after the organisational elections Rao's managers have announced. A new party president is to be elected by December 31, according to the schedule they have prepared essentially to buy time for another six months.

The party's leaders and MP's were agog at the development and a worried Rao called his chief lieutenants for discussions on Sunday morning. Those present included Sharad Pawar, Pranab Mukherjee, SB Chavan, Manmohan Singh, Jagannath Mishra, G Venkatswamy and Santosh Mohan Deb.

Rao is no doubt particularly worried about the presence at Saturday's dinner meeting of Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Digvijay Singh and Rajasthan Unit President Ashok Gehlot.

Also present were former members of Rao's ministry, Madhavrao Scindia and P Chidambaram, who were expelled from the party when they formed other parties to contest the Lok Sabha elections. Kamal Nath, who remains in the party but has spoken out publicly against Rao, was also there.

The others present were CWC members Ghulam Nabi Azad and Rajesh Pilot, Bihar unit chief Tariq Anwar, Priya Ranjan Das Munshi, Oscar Fernandes, Ambika Soni, Anand Sharma, Birendra Singh and Bhupinder Huda. Many of these are popular among the party rank and file and some of them had been Rao supporters until the reverses the party suffered during these elections.

Rao's managers sought to contain the situation by keeping in touch with MP's. Their strategy is to build on Rao's strength in the CPP [Chief Public Prosecutor], since even rebel leaders acknowledge that he has the unstinted support of at least half the 136 new Lok Sabha Congress members.

Rao's managers have generated talk among some of these MP's about their being a more important part of decision making in the party than the CWC which comprises a number of leaders who have lost their elections to the Lok Sabha.

Mukherjee hosted dinner last night for some of the new MP's, ostensibly to teach first timers how to vote. Other new MP's had been similarly entertained the night before.

India: Rao Camp Prepares Blueprint of 'Preconditions'

BK2605160096 Delhi INDIAN EXPRESS in English 25 May 96 p 9

[Report by Yogesh Vajpeyi]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Confident that the downfall of the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] government is imminent, the Congress has now changed tack.

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Three senior members of P.V. Narasimha Rao's outgoing government — Pranab Mukherjee, Sitaram Kesri and Manmohan Singh — are now preparing a blueprint which Rao will insist the UF [United Front] prime minister designate H.D. Deve Gowda follow in return for the party's support.

While he himself has been meeting party MP's in groups for the past five days to assess their mood, Rao has asked his confidants to encourage the formation of "pressure groups" so that he can justify imposition of conditions on the UF leadership.

The gathering of 60-odd MP's at the residence of former Union Minister Suresh Kalmadi yesterday and dinner-conclaves at the residences of Pranab Mukherjee and Rajya Sabha member Hanumantha Rao tonight were part of the preconceived plan.

Rao wants to assure his flock that he alone could safeguard their interests and, if possible, fulfill their desire to be in the government once again in foreseeable future.

Mukherjee told Congress MP's tonight that UF leader Deve Gowda had personally assured him that the UF government would not adopt a hostile attitude towards the interests of Congressmen. The UF leader had called on him earlier in the day.

The changing stance of the Congress was emphasised by AICC [All India Congress Committee] General Secretary Devendra Dwivedi when he pointed out that Rao's letter to the president extending support to Deve Gowda's claim had not used the term "unconditional."

"To the President, we only said that we would support the Deve Gowda government from outside. We didn't say whether it was conditional support or unconditional support," Dwivedi clarified.

The Congress would insist that the parties it supported interact with its leaders frequently and evolve a common programme.

His comment on the preconditions the party planned to attach on CBI [Central Board of Investigation] investigations against Congress leaders including Rao was equally significant.

"We have always stated that the law should be allowed to take its course. But we don't want law to take their course." he quipped.

By promising congressmen a bite into the cake of power, Rao not only wants to keep his flock together, but also hopes to remain the rallying point of the Congressmen in the face of a concerted bid by his detractors like K. Karunakaran, Balram Jakhar and others to dislodge him from the party presidentship.

To keep opponents of a pact with the UF on his side, Rao has asked his lieutenants to start collecting a list of their grievances against the UF governments in their states so that he could take up the matter with the UF government at the Centre immediately after it was installed.

He told MP's and senior Congress leaders from West Bengal, Bihar and Orissa today that the moment he realised that supporting the UF would add to their woes, he would not hesitate in pulling the Deve Gowda government.

Significantly, the three congress MP's from West Bengal most vociferous in opposing the support to the UF government in New Delhi, Mamta Banerjee, Priya Ranjan Das Munshi and Idris, did not go to meet Rao today as part of the West Bengal delegation.

Devendra Dwivedi, who is the AICC general secretary in charge of West Bengal, admits that there are problems in convincing the MP's from West Bengal and Kerala. "But we are confident that they would see the leadership's point of view." he added.

India: Congress Confident Government Cannot Survive Trust Vote

BK2605164196 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 1530 GMT 26 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The United Front has said that it will only put up a few speakers during the debate on the confidence motion in the Lok Sabha, so that voting can take place tomorrow itself. Briefing newspersons after the meeting of the Steering Committee of the constituent parties of the Front in New Delhi today, the spokesman, Mr. Jaipal Reddy, said the idea behind the exercise is to remove the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] government at the earliest. He, however, agreed that the final decision on when the voting will take place can only be taken by the speaker. Mr. Reddy said the United Front and the Congress will be coordinating on the floor of the house.

The Congress today expressed confidence that the Vajpayee government will not be able to survive the confidence vote as the numbers were heavily loaded against it. The Congress parliamentary party secretary, Mr. B. Narayanaswamy, said most of the party MP's are already in the capital and the rest are expected to reach by tomorrow morning when the discussion on the confidence motion begins.

The left parties today held a separate meeting at the CPI-M [Communist Party of India-Marxist] headquarters to discuss various issues, including participation in a future government. The CPI-M politburo member, Mr.

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Sitaram Yechuri, said his party is not reviewing its earlier decision against participation.

India: Update on Most Recent Kashmir Market Explosion

BK2505164396 Hong Kong AFP in English 1636 GMT 25 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] JAMMU, India, May 25 (AFP) — A powerful bomb blast on Saturday [25 May] killed two people and injured 47 others, most of them Indian government officials, in the Kashmir town of Doda, a government spokesman said.

Twenty were in serious condition, he said in the troubled state's winter capital, adding that most of the victims were government officials assigned to supervise the final leg of general elections in Kashmir on May 30.

The spokesman blamed Muslim separatist guerrillas for staging the attack at a bus stand in Doda, 185 kilometres (111 miles) north of Jammu.

Three security personnel were among those seriously injured, hospital doctors said.

Survivors said some 90 election officials travelling from Doda to the Kashmir town of Bhaderwah came under attack when their heavily- guarded convoy halted at the bus stand for food.

"As soon as we stopped there was a big bang. Immediately, blood began to flow from my mouth and I collapsed," said Abdul Gani, an official assigned to a polling station for the May 30 voting.

"We don't know if it was a grenade or a bomb," he told AFP.

Muslim separatists have opposed the first parliamentary elections in seven years in Kashmir. They accused Indian soldiers of forcing people to vote during the May 7 and May 23 balloting in the strife- torn Himalayan state.

The Kashmir administration rushed some of the survivors to local hospitals following the blast and used military helicopters to evacuate the critically injured to federal medical facilities outside Kashmir.

No group claimed responsibility for the Doda bombing but the separatist groups have carried out a number of recent bombings in Doda district in south Kashmir.

A Kashmiri Muslim separatist group claimed responsibility for a May 21 blast in a New Delhi market which killed 13 people and injured 56 others.

It said the bombing was staged to protest the holding of the polls in Kashmir, hit by a Muslim insurgency which has left more than 12,000 people dead since 1989.

On Wednesday, a blast ripped apart a bus in the northern state of Rajasthan killing 22 passengers but no group claimed responsibility for the attack.

Saturday's blast in Doda came as Indian police arrested two Kashmiris in the state summer capital of Srinagar in connection with the car bombing in New Delhi and the blast in Rajasthan.

Farooq Ahmed Khan, head of an anti-terrorism task force, told reporters in Srinagar that the two suspects had been arrested on Thursday. Police identified one of the alleged bombers as Begum Farida, sister of Bilal Beg, the leader of the Jammu and Kashmir Islamic Front (JKLF) which claimed responsibility for the New Delhi blast. The identity of the other suspect was not disclosed.

Farida's arrest sparked protests Saturday by women in the Srinagar district of Soluna, witnesses said. They shouted anti- Indian slogans outside a police station and were beaten by baton- wielding policemen.

In a separate anti-Indian demonstration in Srinagar on Saturday, Indian troops and members of a counter-insurgency group allegedly backed by New Delhi shot two people dead and injured five.

Home Minister Murli Manohar Joshi has accused Pakistan of masterminding the New Delhi blast, saying the government has "concrete proof" of Islamabad's involvement. Pakistan has vehemently denied the accusation.

India and Pakistan have fought two of their three wars over Kashmir, which is claimed by both countries.

India accuses Pakistan of arming and training Muslim militants, a charge Islamabad denies, saying it only extends moral and diplomatic support to a legitimate campaign for self-rule.

Iran

Iran: Larijani—U.S. Policy in Middle East 'Illegitimate'

LD2605201796 Tehran IRNA in English 2004 GMT 26 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, May 26, IRNA — In a meeting here on Sunday [26 May] with the visiting Australian Foreign Ministry director general, Pierce, [name as received] Iran's vice-chariman of Majles foreign policy commission, Mohammad Javad Larijani, called as "illegitimate" and "illogical" the U.S. policies in the Middle East, noting that such policies will certainly be defeated in the course of time.

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He also termed as absolutely "incorrect" the U.S. claims calling Iran as a warmonger in the Middle East.

"If the Washington's politicians had had more careful minds regarding the situation prevailing the world, they might have been able to play a more positive role in the international policy," Larijani indicated.

Suggesting that no sign of trust is visible in the U.S. behavior Larijani stressed "we are determined to go ahead without depending on the United States and others."

He also went on to say that Iran's independence does not mean living in a state of isolation, but today, the country holds widespread and effective foreign relations throughout the world.

In the meeting, Pierce announced his country's interest in expanding relation with the Islamic Republic of Iran, pointing out that holding an expanded relation with the Asian countries particularly with Iran is vital for his country.

Iran: Shalikashvili Visit to Mideast Viewed

LD2605164496 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran in English 1130 GMT 26 May 96

[Unattributed commentary]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Our first commentary for today is entitled: The Visit of the U.S. Military Official to the Persian Gulf region.

[Chairman of the] U.S. Joint Chiefs of the Army Staff General John Shalikashvili started a periodical visit to some countries in the South of the Persian Gulf and in Jordan on Saturday 25 May. In his trip to the Persian Gulf region, General Shalikashvili will visit Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Bahrain. The visit of the [Chairman of the] U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Persian Gulf region is obviously aims to expand and stabilize the military presence of the U.S. in this sensitive and oil-rich region.

This military presence reached a peak since the beginning of Kuwait's occupation by Iraq in 1990. Although the U.S. had previously declared that it would leave the region with the defeat and withdrawal of the Iraqi military men from Kuwait, it left an important part of its forces and equipment in the Persian Gulf. It did this under the pretext of threats by other countries against the shaykhdoms in the South of the Persian Gulf. While this threat has only been manifested in Western mass media and has never been realized. Anyhow, the U.S. through its negative propaganda has managed to ink military agreements with countries that are members of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council, PGCC, selling them extensive weapons — weapons which are not only of no use to these governments but also have to be operated with the help of U.S. military advisors.

In this regard, the most important goal of Washington in the Persian Gulf region is known as control of oil sources. For this reason, the U.S. fight to force back Iraq from Kuwait is evaluated more than anything else as in line with this same policy.

Therefore, the White House only takes measures for its own interests in the Persian Gulf region and has no real and serious obligations to the rulers of the South of region. We saw this last June when the Qatari amir was ousted, Washington took no step to preserve him or bring him back.

Observers regard this incident as a clear reason for U.S. being unreliable for the survival of the southern Persian Gulf region. On the other hand, the visit of the U.S. Joint Chief of the Army Staff to the Persian Gulf region, on the threshold of the anniversary of the formation of the PGCC, is considered as a propaganda move of Washington. It seems that the Americans make efforts to stress they are not very reliable support of the rulers of the southern Persian Gulf region.

While experience shows that the presence of aliens in the region has only increased the tension and on the contrary when the Persian Gulf littoral states, far from the controversy of foreign countries, have gone about the expansion of their ties with understanding, security has been provided more than ever before.

Iran: UN Envoy—U.S. Invitation for Talks Contradicts Actions

LD2605105996 Tehran IRIB Television First Program Network in Persian 0930 GMT 26 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Iran's permanent representative at the United Nations has described U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher's proposal for direct talks between Washington and Tehran as a ploy to attract attention. Kamal Kharrazi [name as heard], our country's permanent UN representative said: The Islamic Republic of Iran has been saying for a long time that America's invitation for open talks with Iran is a ploy to attract public opinion. That invitation is in contradiction of that government's explicit campaign and tyrannical moves against Iran which have been going on since 1357 [Iranian year beginning 21 March 1978].

U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, in a statement on 22 May, accused Iran of terrorist acts aimed at disrupting the talks process in the Middle East, but at the same time stressed America's readiness to talk with Iran's official envoys.

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Iran: Foreign Presence in Gulf Said Caused by Lack of Confidence

LD2405165596 Tehran TEHRAN TIMES in English 21 May 96 p 2

[Unattributed article: "Lack of Confidence Among Persian Gulf States Increases Foreign Interference"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The Speaker of the Kuwaiti Majles-al- Ummah, Shaykh Ahmad 'Abd-al-'Aziz al-Sa'dun, currently visiting Iran, has rightly said that building confidence among the countries of the Persian Gulf is a crucial measure in reducing foreign presence in the region.

Our brothers on the southern coast of the Persian Gulf should have realized by now that Iran is the most trustworthy, reliable ally in the region. At the time of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, Iran strongly condemned the aggression in an unequivocal voice and called for the immediate, unconditional withdrawal of Iraqi forces from that country.

Our Arab neighbors on the other side of the Persian Gulf lagoon should have not forgotten that Kuwait was one of the main financiers of Saddam Husayn's war machine in his eight-year war against Iran. Despite this fact, Iran stood by Kuwait when Iraq attacked the shaykhdom, for, Iran has always opposed aggressors.

Alas, when it comes to Iran's cause, our brothers are normally biased. Take for instance the case of Iranian Island of Abu Musa. The island is an indisputable part of the Iranian territory. Hence, Iran is entitled to utilize the island for any purpose at any time in any form.

Iran has recently decided to build a port on Abu Musa. The Arab League, unnecessarily poking its nose in Iran's internal affairs, has protested against Iran's decision, which is purely an Iranian domestic issue.

Iran, like Kuwait, believes that building confidence among the countries of the region is crucial for reducing foreign interference in the region. In practice, Tehran has proved its sincerity. The ball is in the court of our brotherly neighbors on the other side of the Persian Gulf. They should prove their trustworthiness.

Bilateral and multilateral cooperation among the Persian Gulf states should expand in a way to reduce dependence on and block interference of foreign powers in the region.

Iran: Tehran Paper Reports 'BBC's View' on VOA Persian Casts

LD2405152696 Tehran HAMSHAHRI in Persian 22 May 96 p 16

[Unattributed report: "BBC's View on VOA's Persian Broadcasts"]

[FBIS Translated Text] London: The British state radio [the BBC] in a news bulletin in Persian last night referred to the setting up of a powerful short-wave radio transmitter in Kuwait by the VOA, and predicted that this measure will ultimately have a negative effect on relations between Iran and Kuwait.

The London radio [the BBC] said: With the setting up of this transmitter in Kuwait, America intended [to target] Iran and Iraq. The London radio report indicates that the Persian programs of the VOA do not have many listeners in Iran and no attention is paid to them.

Iran: Fourth Phase of Khaiber Maneuvers Completed

LD2605145096 Tehran IRNA in English 1356 GMT 26 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Bushehr, May 26, IRNA — The fourth phase of a military exercise codenamed 'Khaiber' ended successfully in the Persian Gulf on Sunday [26 May], announced a senior military official.

According to chief of the tactical headquarters of the maneuver, Gholam Reza Ma'sumi, during the Sunday exercise, performed by Army and IRGC personnel, landing of forces to defend captured areas, attacking the logistical routes used by hypothetical enemy, and returning heavy and light floating units to their bases were conducted.

The 5-day amphibious maneuver commenced last Thursday in an area as wide as 5,500 square miles in the Persian Gulf between the Kharg Island and the port of Deyyer.

Iran: Nateq-Nuri Praises Work of Majles Session at Closing

LD2605114796 Tehran IRIB Television First Program Network in Persian 0930 GMT 26 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The fourth Majles of the Islamic Republic of Iran officially ended its legislative term today with a special ceremony and presentation of commemorative plaques to Majles deputies.

At the ceremony, Majles speaker Nateq-Nuri referred to the fourth Majles characteristics in its investigation and adoption of government and private members bills on

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the basis of the principles of expertise, discipline, harmony, sincerity, and active cooperation by the deputies. He added: The fourth Majles managed to carry out its legislative duties in a sound atmosphere and in a fitting manner. It discharged its duties to the state and the revolutionary people.

Nateq-Nuri assessed the composition of Majles deputies to be good on the basis of the extent of their erudition and scholarship and considered the presence of some of the war combatants, relatives of war martyrs, and self-sacrificing devotees [war disabled] among the deputies to have been invaluable.

He estimated the performance of the fourth Majles in overseeing affairs to have been positive and, saying it had pleased the supreme leader and added: Besides assisting the government, the fourth Majles truly employed its supervisory instruments wisely and free from factionalism and political ideologies. The Majles speaker said: The preservation and strengthening the Basiji spirit and the adoption of the bill for the judicial support for Basijis and putting state factory shares at the disposal of the self-sacrificing devotees, as well as supporting women by reforming the divorce laws and securing women's and children's livelihoods, the family planning law, and keeping the name of Moddarres [famous cleric involved in the constitutional struggle] as the symbol of legislature in the country are some of the outstanding services rendered by the fourth Majles.

Describing the fourth Majles approach to foreign relations issues as active and timely, Nateq-Nuri said: The presence of the fourth Majles in political arenas and its stance on various issues, especially on confronting the [world] arrogance, America, and the Zionists, were most effective and positive. The comment made by the supreme leader concerning the integration of ethics and politics in the fourth Majles is an honorable testament to this Majles term.

The Majles speaker thanked the supreme jurisconsult and the leader for his timely guidelines and his lead for the Majles. He also thanked President Hashemi-Rafsanjani and the cabinet for their proper and effective cooperation with the Majles in promoting the affairs.

Concluding, the Majles speaker presented the deputies with commemorative plaques in honor of their services in the fourth term.

Iran: Khamene'i on Importance of Culture in Islamic Society

LD2705174796 Tehran IRAN NEWS in English 21 May 96 p 2

[Commentary: "Union of Volition and Understanding"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Culture is a very important subject, for it has to do with the mentality of people and the formation of human characters, Ayatollah Seyyed 'Ali Khamene'i stated during a meeting with the minister of culture and Islamic guidance and a number of officials of the ministry.

In his speech the leader pointed out that a number of projects have already been prepared, which have to be executed with care and understanding.

Over the years, the basic cultural and artistic values suitable for our Islamic society have been worked out, and no basic or comprehensive modifications would seem to be required. This is clearly corroborated by the leader's emphasis that the plans and programs which have already been prepared have to be carried out carefully and that executive duties should be entrusted to people of sound understanding as well as managerial capabilities. For as Ayatollah Khamene'i pointed out "the will to act should be coupled with correct understanding" in order that desirable results may be obtained.

Misunderstanding of the basic principle and erroneous application of the principles will not only impede the course of cultural progress but will also have negative results because they will create doubts regarding the validity of the principles.

In the field of cinema, for instance, the misapplication of principles can have many undesirable effects. And while deploring the neglect of film makers in dealing with certain significant subjects — notable omissions are aspects of the history of the Islamic revolution — the leader emphasised the need for exporting valuable Iranian movies with properly prepared versions in foreign languages.

Of particular interest is the leader's remark on the phenomenon of cultural assault which, as he pointed out, is taking global dimensions. The abuse of technological gadgetry such as the satellite has created grave concerns in many parts of the world. The prospect of whole nations' mentalities and attitudes being shaped by a few broadcasting centres is really appalling, and should be resisted.

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Iran: Increased Roles for Women Candidates in Fifth Majles

LD2605183896 Tehran SALAM in Persian 21 May 96 pp 9-10

[Article: "Women and Fifth Majles Seats"]

[FBIS Translated Text] One of the features of the fifth Majles has been the noticeable presence of women candidates. Although we were witness to a substantial development because of the number of women candidates participating in the elections, nevertheless, the results of the fifth elections did not differ very much from those of the previous elections and only one more woman was added to the existing number of women deputies.

But this does not mean that all the female deputies of the previous round retained their seats. Indeed, only four out of the nine female deputies of the fourth Majles were able to obtain the necessary number of votes in the fifth round. These four were:

1. Qodsiyeh Seyyedi-Alavi from Mashhad who is a gynacologist and was a member of the health and hygene committee of the fourth Majles.
2. Nafiseh Fayyazbakhsh from Tehran who holds a postgraduate degree in philosophy and law and who was a member of the education and training committee of the fourth Majles.
3. Marziyeh Vahid-Dastjerdi from Tehran, a gynacologist and member of the health and hygiene committee of the fourth Majles.
4. Monireh Nowbakht from Tehran who holds a postgraduate degree in history. She was a member of the culture and higher education committee of the fourth Majles.

Six other women replaced the five deputies of the fourth Majles who failed to gain seats in the fifth elections. Two of these succeeded in winning seats in the first round [Fa'ezeh Rafsanjani and Marziyeh Dabbagh, both from Tehran]. The four who obtained the necessary votes in the second round were:

1. Soheyla Jelowdarzadeh from Tehran who holds a diploma in textile design.
2. Fatemeh Ramezanzadeh from Tehran, a gynacologist.
3. Shahrbanu Amani-Anganeh from Urumiyyeh.
4. Marziyeh Sadiqi from Mashhad.

Taking note of the fact that in this set of the elections women with different types of expertise have entered the Majles, it is hoped that, following the acceptance of their credentials, they may be able to take part in many committees and succeed in carrying out their quests in a more fitting manner.

Iran: Nabavi Reacts to Deputy's Criticism of Ansar-e Hezbollah

LD2405220096 Tehran AKHBAR in Persian 22 May 96 p 2

[Unattributed article: "Nabavi: The Majority of Deputies Value the Services of Student Basijis"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Morteza Nabavi, Majles deputy for Tehran, at yesterday's open session of the Majles, strongly criticized Ardabil Deputy Mohammad Gharibian's pre-agenda speech. Engineer Nabavi said: I wish I had died and not heard the worst of insults being hurled from the sacred podium at the pure basijis of this land!

He added: I wish I was deaf and not heard the abusive language used to describe the children of the battlefronts — those who spent years of their lives fighting the wicked enemy; who offered their eyes, hands, legs and other parts of their bodies to their friends; who attend the university in wheel-chairs; are standing steadfast at the bastion of the university, combating liberalism and America's onslaught on the culture of this territory and who are the selfless children of the Imam [Khomeyni] and of of the velayat-e faqih [supreme jurisconsult, Khamene'i].

He added: I wish I was blind and not seen a person speaking from the [Majles] podium and identifying these [basiji] favourites of the Imam [Khomeyni] and of the esteemed leader of the Islamic revolution and this noble, revolutionary nation, as "those who are looking for chaos".

He said: Are those who went to the battlefronts yesterday and are today propagating virtue and prohibiting vice under the sacred name of Ansar-e Hezbollah [upholders of Hezbollah] seeking to create chaos? Are those who still carry pieces of enemy shrapnel in their bodies, to abandon the principle of propagation of virtue, prohibition of vice and remain silent in the face of the assaults against their religious values?

He continued: Should these student basijis also remain silent in the universities in the face of the attacks of the new liberals and the supporters of the notion of the separation of religion from politics?

He added: Are those who are not calling themselves "Hezbollah" out of modesty, but, inspired by the culture of the battlefronts, call themselves the Ansar-e Hezbollah, abusing the titles of [Islamic and revolutionary] values?

Should these brave boys whose heads are filled with nothing but the thought of Imam Husayn, be referred to

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from this podium and on the first day of the month of Moharram [19 May], as "offenders?" [passage omitted]

Engineer Nabavi added: If, as you recommend, the Interior Ministry should stop the basiji students from going to university — where that doctor [Sorush] and his power-seeking and riotous gang who call these dear ones "fascists" and do not spare these basiji victims of shrapnel from any insults, and who are constantly being applauded by the Voice of America, the BBC, and radio Israel —can we ever Islamize the universities? He added: According to these sick intellectuals, Islam is of no use to government and should merely stick to the [issue of] afterlife. [passage omitted]

How can this shameful stain be wiped off from the face of the fourth Majles?

He said: The decisive majority of the fourth Majles deputies express contempt at these kinds of claims and value the services of basiji students and all revolutionary forces.

He added: On Sunday 1 Moharram when the name of Sha'ban the Brainless [crowd leader against Mosaddeq in 1953] was heard from this podium and he was being compared to the followers of Imam Husayn and the path of Karbala', the deputies trembled; they could hardly breath; some of them wished they could die; they did not know how to react to this.

He said: The world plunged into darkness for them. Today we are here and the shame is still with us. This humble servant, for himself, is ashamed before the imam [Khomeyni] and the leader of the ummah [Khamene'i] and begs forgiveness. I hope that this disgraceful act will not be associated with the majority in the fourth Majles.

At the end of Nabavi's speech, 'Ali Mohammad Gharibian, deputy for Ardabil, objected and said that his remarks concerning the "Ansar-e Hezbollah" had been distorted. He addressed the speaker of the Majles saying: In my speech I did not mention any specific group (Ansar-e Hezbollah) and some of the deputies have distorted my remarks. [passage omitted]

Iran: Paper Reports on Energy Consumption, Subsidy Levels

LD2705173396 Tehran IRAN in Persian 21 May 96 p 13

[Unattributed report: "Iranians Consumed $11.5 Billion Worth of Energy in 1373"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Economic service: The total value of the fuel consumed in the country in 1373 [year ending 20 March 1995] exceeded 34,000,500 billion rials, equivalent to $11.5 billion dollars.

According to our reporter, Mehdi Rahmati, director-general of the energy department of the Plan and Budget Organization, announced this information on the third day of the conference on poverty and fighting poverty, adding: The consumed fuel consisted of oil by-products, natural gas, and electricity (without including the fuel used to generate the electricity).

He said: The total subsidy paid for the consumption of this fuel in 1373 amounted to about 31,000 billion rials, of which 21,100 billion rials was spent on oil; 3,070 billion rials on electricity; and 6,830 billion rials on natural gas. [passage omitted]

The director-general of the energy department at the Plan and Budget Organization said: The total energy subsidy for 1373 amounted to 33 percent of Iran's GDP. This amount was equivalent to 104 percent in relation to government expenditure and 273 percent in relation to the government's development expenditure. [passage omitted]

In conclusion, Rahmati said: A reduction in the subsidy for gas, petrol, and electricity would not have a substantial impact on the social situation of families.

Iran: Papers Ready To Aid AKHBAR

LD2405172696 Tehran AKHBAR in Persian 22 May 96 p 1

[Unattributed report: "Help From HAMSHAHRI; AKHBAR in Four Pages; Public: We Support the Newspaper"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The news network of AKHBAR: The managers of the daily HAMSHAHRI yesterday provided AKHBAR with some sheets of paper in order to prevent a halt in the newspaper's publication and increase the number of its pages.

Last Sunday [19 May], as a result of economic difficulties and the shortage of paper, AKHBAR reduced the number of its pages to four. On Monday and Tuesday the paper was forced to further reduce its volume to only two pages.

Yesterday the newspaper's office received numerous sympathetic telephone calls from its friends, readers, and journalist colleagues. These individuals all expressed sympathy with the newspaper's reporters, editors, and other employees. [passage omitted]

The English-language daily IRAN NEWS yesterday proposed that the representatives of the Iranian press should convene a meeting with the aim of helping

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AKHBAR. IRAN NEWS has written that it is prepared to give all the help it can to AKHBAR.

It is noteworthy that various sections of the press have reacted in different ways to the recent reduction in the number of this newspaper's pages.

Iran: Press Board 'Reluctantly' Closes PAYAM-E DANESHJU

LD2405163396 Tehran AKHBAR in Persian 22 May 96 p 2

[Unattributed Report: "The Press Supervisory Board Reluctantly Withdraws the License for PAYAM-E DANESHJU"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Tehran, IRNA: The secretariat of the press supervisory board has issued a statement explaining the reasons for withdrawing the publication licence of PAYAM-E DANESHJU [weekly that has criticized the government and a number of revolutionary institutions].

The statement says: We are at present experiencing the destiny- making era of reconstruction in which the heroic people of Iran have chosen to endure the inevitable hardships and cooperate with the government. However, right in the middle of this period, PAYAM-E DANESHJU has still chosen to bring disheartening issues to the surface and level predominantly unfounded and baseless allegations against the servants of the nation, thereby providing propaganda ammunition for the arrogant media.

Another part of the statement says: Following a court session attended by the esteemed members of the press jury with the responsibility of dealing with this weekly's offenses, the chief editor of the paper gave a written guarantee that in future the weekly would refrain from employing undesirable methods of journalism and would rectify its past mistakes. Subsequently, the issue of the weekly's publication licence was put forward to the esteemed members of the press supervisory board. As a sign of respect for the court's verdict and also due to the verbal assurances by the paper's editor that in future he would respect the rights of other citizens, the board agreed that PAYAM-E DANESHJU may continue publication.

The statement adds: Unfortunately, however, despite its promises to the judiciary and contrary to all expectations, the weekly continued to employ unprincipled and improper methods. The supervisory board therefore reluctantly decided to withdraw the publication licence of the said weekly.

Iran: Plastic Computer Parts To Be Made for International Market

LD2605210296 Tehran RESALAT in Persian 21 May p 5

[Interview with Hosayn Nur-Mahani, head of a union of manufacturers of plastic products, with unidentified correspondent; place and date not given: "Plastic Computer Parts To Be Produced for the First Time"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Economic service: The union of manufacturers of plastic products is engaged in talks and signing a contract with Japan on manufacturing plastic computer parts.

Announcing this in an interview with our correspondent, Hosayn Nur-Mahani, head of the executive board of the union of manufacturers and dealers of plastic, nylon, and melamine products, said: At present plastic parts needed by computer manufacturing companies in Japan are produced in other countries.

When an expert from one of the Japanese companies visited our country's plastic manufacturing companies, he approved the parts produced in Iran because of their quality and low cost.

He added: The production cost of goods manufactured by Iranian companies is much cheaper compared to other countries, therefore, we have a solid base for competition at the international market.

He said: When an agreement is reached on manufacturing computer parts, the parts will be produced in the country for the first time.

He added: Before the implementation of the first [five-year development] plan, Iran's plastic products did not have any international market because of lack of raw materials and dependency on foreign sources. However, Iran's products now have buyers in France, Germany, Canada, Austria, Persian Gulf littoral states, and Central Asia.

The existing problems facing the producers are financial issues, problems with municipalities, and cumbersome regulations. A proper solution should be found to those problems to accelerate the work.

He noted: Another problem and obstacle on the path of production is our inability to offer and produce continuously. For example, an agreement is signed with a country or a commercial side to deliver goods continually for six months, however, because of various reasons such as shortages of material and cumbersome regulations and laws an orderly production cannot be achieved. [passage omitted]

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Iran: State-Run Motor Industry Needs 'Fundamental Change'

LD2705214096 Tehran SALAM in Persian 21 May 96 p 2

[Report by Ali Ghafouri from "Behind The Headline" column: "State Car Industry in Need of Fundamental Change"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] News reports on 20 May said the Majles supervisory principles committee [as published] has issued a report in which it described as unacceptable the high price and poor quality of cars produced in Iran and has asked the minister of industry to explain the situation.

Amid all these comments, there is one very interesting point: Iran's motor industry compensates for all its technical and administrative weaknesses by selling domestically produced cars for much more than their real or world market prices. The motor industry has always been supported by the country's officials like a vulnerable child. In view of its complete monopoly in the domestic market, it can put its products on the market at unfair prices which are determined by the industry itself.

Instead of taking advantage of the situation to enhance its quality and demonstrate initiatives and expertise in production, the industry has merely resorted to increased prices. The current price of each Pride [as published] car manufactured in Iran is 50 million rials. Based on an exchange rate of one dollar to 3,000 rials, a purchaser pays over $16,000 for each Pride car. This is at a time when the price of the same car in Korea is only around $3,800 to $4,500. [passage omitted]

Another very interesting example is the Peykan, a car which still has the features of cars produced 30 years ago. Taking advantage of the monopoly, each car is sold at 29 million rials, a price which is equivalent to that of a Honda or a Daewoo on the world market.

It should be added that the motor industry enjoys many state privileges such as purchasing raw materials at very competitive prices, employing cheap labor, and occasionally using an exchange rate of 1,750 rials to one dollar.

The question to ask is this: if today's industry — with such extensive state support and cheap labor, as well as its monopoly position, and the absence of competition (because imports of foreign cars are banned) — is unable to enhance its production, both qualitatively and quantitatively, and can only resort to increasing the price of its cars, will it be able to compete with its foreign rivals in the absence of the above factors? [passage omitted]

We do not want to compare Iran with international car manufacturers, but it should be noted that in 1995 a total of 53 million cars were produced in the world. The United States and Japan produced 13 million and 11 million cars respectively. Is it not now time that we increase our share in the car production market? Is it justifiable to remain behind countries such as Thailand, Taiwan, and Indonesia?

Iran: Commentator Views Measures To Eradicate Poverty

LD2705094396 Tehran KAYHAN INTERNATIONAL in English 21 May 96 pp 2, 7

[Commentary by Amin Sabooni from the "Viewpoint" column: "Let Us Be Forewarned"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Poverty may not constitute a major challenge to the Islamic Republic of Iran at the turn of the century. But at the same time, it also cannot be neglected as a non-issue.

President Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani told a poverty alleviation seminar at the weekend [18-20 May] that "17 percent of Iranians live below the poverty line — a 30 percent decline from the 1974-75 period." He strongly rejected allegations that "in the Islamic Republic the rich have grown richer while the poor have become poorer."

By the standards of developing countries Iran is not at all a poor country. The difficulties of revolution, the eight-year war, the high cost of reconstruction, and systematic foreign pressure, combined together, would be more than enough to dislodge even industrial and economic powers. We were not close to that category, but still survived and are now in the process of sustainable development.

It is amply clear that sacrifices are to be made, and people with open minds do recognize the terrible truth that there is no quick- fix solution to poverty. True, the whole business of poverty abolition is very complicated, as a variety of formidable parameters are at work. But it must be realized that it is the duty of the government to ensure that sacrifices should be evenly distributed and the weak should be the last to carry the burden.

Islamic Iran has made great strides in expanding education, health, and social welfare programs. Given the circumstances, the Rafsanjani administration has done well in terms of rural development. According to available figures, 25 percent of the government's current account expenditure is earmarked for education.

It is apparent that what has been done so far was necessary but it is by no means sufficient.

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Let us be forewarned. We need to address on an urgent footing problems posed by wholesale profiteering, population growth, low productivity, unemployment, mismanagement, lack of accountability, environmental degradation, poor work ethics.... which in no small way create and contribute to poverty.

A breakthrough is essential to ensure, among other things, that all Iranian children have a bright future at a time when science and technology open new opportunities for growth and, at the same time, bring into sharp focus the gap between plenty and poverty.

Today one-fifth of the world's population lives below the poverty line. From Angola to America there are millions who toil for a humble living but have to make do with much less. Fortunately, the lot of our society does not belong to this group and we are almost free of what universally have come to be known as "streets by day, bedrooms by night."

However, we can ill afford to sit back and not prepare for the challenges inherent in economic reforms, integration of the global economy, competitiveness, and the absolute need to do more with less (this normally applies to state institutions).

Recent experience has taught us that oil is not a reliable source of revenue. This should be our base, a sort of starting point. Our development agenda must be based on realistic assessments not short-term goals. Development to be sustainable cannot rest on fragile socioeconomic structures. In the recent past we witnessed much zigzagging as the government adopted assorted methods to address the country's economic problems.

Those in power — planners and policymakers —should earnestly take into account the well-being of all Iranians. The privileged can take care of themselves.

With the population having doubled since the 1979 Islamic Revolution to over 60 million, our options do not seem to be unlimited. In order to get rid of poverty the government should invest more in education and human development, control population growth, and make employment productive.

The history of a whole lot of countries has shown that subsidies and charity are not lasting solutions. They never were. Those who speak on behalf of the Islamic nation and make policy decisions should see to it that their plans contribute to the material and moral enrichment of our Islamic society in general.

Pakistan

Pakistan: Bhutto's Abbottabad Speech Concerning Pakistan's Future

BK2405135496 Islamabad THE NATION in English 24 May 96 p 5

["Text" of an address by Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto to the High Court Bar Association in Abbottabad on 23 May]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Distinguished lawyers, today we live in a global village. A place where nations are brought closer to each other through mutual interests and mutual anxieties.

The end of the Cold War provided a precious moment in time to build a new international order based on justice, equality, democracy, pluralism and freedom. In this historic window of opportunity for mankind, universal political values, as guaranteed in the Charter of the United Nations should adhere.

Today, as the communication revolution brings us together, global values are emerging. In the East and the West, in the North and the South, leaders, governments and parties are agreeing that:

1. democracy is the best polity;

2. defence of human rights is a universal right;

3. combating terrorism is a global challenge;

4. breaking the international network of narcotics smugglers and tackling the drug problem is a common endeavour;

5. free market economy and free international trade can strengthen economies.

6. corruption is a social evil which cannot be neglected;

7. without population control, progress cannot be achieved;

8. investment in women and children is the need of the hour;

9. extremism in the East and in the West is a danger to global harmony.

However, the most fundamental political value of the new age is our dedication to the right of all people to decide their own futures.

Our dedication to the principle that aggression should be collectively challenged, whenever it rears its ugly head. Unfortunately the people of Jammu and Kashmir have not been given this right. The Secretary General of the United Nations has described the Jammu and Kashmir

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dispute as the oldest item on the UN agenda. The sons and daughters of Kashmir continue to be killed, tortured, maimed and dishonoured.

Six hundred thousand occupation troops, under the umbrella of draconian laws, wage a reign of terror.

India is now holding sham elections, which are not fair, not free and most importantly, not acceptable to the Kashmiri political leadership. Phony elections boycotted by the people cannot be a substitute for the implementation of the UN Security Council Resolutions granting Kashmir the right of self-determination.

Distinguished friends, The Jammu and Kashmir dispute is the central issue to peace and stability in South Asia. South Asia is an area where subcontinental cold winds still blow. An area where an arms race continues at a feverish pace. India has one of the most active nuclear programmes on earth, producing fissile material each day. They exploded a nuclear bomb in 1974. Some say they plan to hold a second nuclear test. The Indian nuclear missile programme in South Asia gives Pakistan only three minutes response time to an attack.

Having faced aggression four times at the hands of India, Pakistan cannot remain unconcerned at such developments. Our apprehensions are shared by other countries of our region who have also faced intervention in one form or another. These include Bangladesh, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Nepal and Fiji.

The international community, having ended the Cold War has failed to come up with conflict prevention and conflict resolution mechanisms.

We, who dreamt of a world free of tension, who saw in the demise of the Cold War, the emergence of a Peace Dividend are left wondering where the nations of the world are heading.

On one side there is greater unity greater commonality of goals, a universal order. Yet, on the other hand, we veer towards a new world disequilibrium, where regional conflicts threaten to engulf us in fresh fires.

We are strong, we are powerful. Today we are more educated, more resourceful than hundred years ago. Today we have more technology, more information, more methods of communication at our disposal.

And yet, in some senses, we are powerless. Powerless to prevent the killing in Rwanda. Powerless to immediately stop the bombing of Lebanon. Powerless to stop a senseless civil war in Afghanistan.

And it took us so long to get the Dayton Peace Accord in Bosnia- Herzegovina where blood was being shed in the heart of Europe.

There is no peace in Kashmir. There is no peace in Afghanistan. Parts of Azerbaijan are under occupation. There is an insurgency in Tajikistan in Chechyna. The Mid East peace process is incomplete.

We have conquered the plague and tuberculosis. But AIDS and Ebola have come to haunt us.

We condemn child labours. Words do not cost us anything.

But are the developed countries prepared to help us financially, politically and morally for the values we all hold so dear. These are the questions which agitate us as we head towards a new century. A century that holds so much promise. Yet a century that forebodes the pitfalls of narrow minded extremism.

Distinguished friends,

Since the dawn of civilisation only three forces have emerged with the force and the power to change the destiny of a nation and affect the world.

These three forces were communism, religion and nationalism. The twentieth century saw the decline of communism. I predict the twenty-first century will see the rise of religion and nationalism.

We who believe in an identity larger than ourselves, who believe in universal values will need to confront the forces of extremism and fanaticism and narrow minded ethnic-centric forces. This is what I see as the mission of the Peoples Government, the goal of my party, workers and supporters.

We have declared jehad against the forces of terrorism, sectarianism, narcotics culture, extremists and kalashinkov culture.

We believe in a federal and parliamentary system of government. We believe in provincial autonomy and in district governments. That is why we have set up SAP [Social Action Program] Boards at the district level.

We believe in a free press, an independent judiciary and the right of political dissents.

We have brought peace to the troubled city of Karachi. Before women waited in fear as their menfolk went to work. Their pain was our pain.

We did not permit groups to call each other Kafir [infidel] in Punjab or to kill each other. We arrested those that none other could.

We promised "good government" and we didn't protect our own MNAs [members of National Assembly], who are our brothers, when they were wanted in cases.

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We arrested and convicted a banker who had billions. But he could not buy anyone in our government.

We will not permit Cooperatives or Taj Companies where widows and pensioners are looted by the rich and powerful.

Four members of the last regime took Rs. [rupees] 14 billion from the Banks in 3 years. No Cabinet member of ours is allowed to take a loan from a government bank.

"Tijarat" and "Siyasat" [trade and politics] are two different things.

We are ideological people with a mission to clean up society. For that we need to strengthen the forces of democratisation too.

In its hour of greatest success, democracy faces its greatest threat all over the world.

There is a growing cynicism about political leaders and political parties. Now that the ideological differences have subsided with the decline of Communism, people find it difficult to differentiate.

The communication revolution has also fed the frenzy of cynicism. The more sensational a story, the more bloody a War, the greater the devastation of an earthquake or volcano the bigger the news. Bad news seems to excite us and thrill us.

Although Pakistan has had dictatorship for more than half its life, we love to make fun of politicians. Now Governors are not allowed to dabble in the drug trade. Now "Afghan Jehad" money is not sent to Swiss Banks. Now "Ocher" [not further specified] style cover ups do not take place. Now Motorway deals are not discussed in the prime minister's secretariat. Yet we like to think that nothing has changed.

Sweeping allegations are made and truth is the victim.

When I was a young child, I was taught that politics is the noblest profession. To serve the people in the greatest calling.

Today, we do not seem to care about issues. We don't discuss the illiteracy rate, the population rate, infant mortality, loss of intelligence quotient due to lack of iodine or children dying of polio, the budget deficit debt repayment.

"Ilzaam Tarashi" and "Gaali Galowch" [mudslinging and abuse] have become the order of the day. Mud slinging has replaced the word manifesto. Such negative campaigning and character assassination, enlarged and circulated through Radio, TV and the Press titillate us and excite us. But they also discredit us. Such mud slinging unfairly undermines political leaders, parties and the democratic process itself. Mud slinging unfairly undermines political leaders, parties and the democratic process itself.

We could not speak during the days of dictatorship. Now we can't keep silent.

But mud slinging is taking place all over the world. What did the mother of a congressional leader call an American President? [reference as published] What did an author write about Mother Theresa? It seems no one in public life is safe.

"They are all the same" is cry heard too often in too many countries.

Split mandates or close electoral results testify to this.

We attack each others character, patriotism and honesty and loyalty. We have double standards.

The real problems and issues are neglected and undebated due to the name calling. What is to be done?

We must look beyond the slanderous attacks to the problems we face and how different governments seek to solve them.

Good Governance is the yardstick I want our people, and our country to judge our Government by.

How much we spend on education, how many schools we build, how many villages we electrify, what we do for women and for children, for population planning, for narcotics control, for promoting peace and security for our citizens, for the environment. This is my concern.

To build Pakistan a modern Islamic Social Democracy.

I traveled to Bosnia with Turkey's Prime Minister Ciller because as women and mothers we wanted to show our support for the women of Bosnia and children of Bosnia.

I traveled to Cairo to attend the Population Conference because as leader of a country amongst the nine most populated Nations of the world, I felt a special commitment to the cause.

I travelled to Beijing to attend the Women Conference. As a woman leader, I feel a special responsibility to all women, and Muslim Women in particular to promote women rights.

We need the courage to do what is right, even if it comes under criticism from some groups.

For in a democracy, there will always be criticism. That is the strength of democracy. People are free to speak. It is only in a dictatorship that people are silenced at the point of a gun.

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I can proudly say the Government of Pakistan has paid off $1 billion of debt from privatisation proceeds, since we took office nearly 3 years ago. But we still have a long way to go.

Distinguished Lawyers.

Today there is growing concern about the Muslim World. Contrary to perceptions caused by some incidents, Islam is a religion of tolerance which believes in the rights of women and children.

The first convert to Islam was a woman Bibi Khadija, the wife of the Holy Prophet (PBUH [praise be upon her]). Bibi Khadija was a working woman and is an inspiration to all working women in the Muslim world. It is not religion which has exploited us and discriminated us. It is customs, traditions and pure chauvinism.

The women of Pakistan, as indeed the women in the Muslim world and women all over, are struggling to overcome the prejudices of centuries old customs, traditions and chauvinistic attitudes.

The People's Government hosted the first Women Parliamentarian conference from Muslim Countries in Islamabad in 1995.

In 1997 we hope to hold the first Muslim Women's Olympics.

We have set up Women Police Stations, a Women Bank and raised a force of 32,000 women in 3 years to fight infant mortality and population rates. And we are succeeding.

We have brought our population rate down from 3.1 percent to 2.9 percent.

Now our target is to bring it down 2.6 percent.

Since we formed the government in Pakistan in 1993, we agreed to sign CEDAW — the Convention for Elimination of Discrimination Against Women.

When the PPP [Pakistan People's Party] Government was last formed in 1988-90, we ratified the Convention on the Rights of Children. Five thousand cases have been registered against those violating our laws regarding children, since we formed the government less than 3 years ago.

We intend to send a signal of a government that is humane in:

(a) Protecting women

(b) Protecting minorities

(c) Protecting children

But a government that is tough on:

(a) Terrorism

(b) Narcotics

(c) Exploiters of the weaker segments of society.

As we fight these evils, motivated groups seek to tarnish our image and undermine our efforts.

They do this, because we threaten their interests. But we are not deterred.

My colleagues and I, the Party and Government I lead, and the people who support us are ready to pay the price for change. I lost a father. The Chief Minister of Frontier lost a brother. The Chief Minister of Sindh lost a brother.

Yet we are not ready to accept the status quo.

Making a difference is what matters.

Under our government, we have successfully projected Pakistan as a vital country. At the crossroads to the Gulf, Central Asia and East Asia. And we are a voice of moderation within the Muslim world. We believe in peaceful means of change. We believe in working within a constitution and within the law. We did not accept the non-party elections of 1985.

And yet the PPP fought within the system.

We did not accept the rigged elections of (?1991). Yet we opposed it within the system. And we brought change within the system.

When the Supreme Court gave a controversial judgement in March 1996, we implemented it despite our reservations. We implemented it despite the fact that eminent jurist expressed concern. And to redress our reservations, we chose the Constitutional way out.

We went back to the same Court to ask:

1. Whether words could be added or deleted to the Constitution through a judgement;

2. Whether conventions could over-ride the express words of the Constitution;

3. Whether the doctrine of necessity could be invoked in the presence of a Constitution;

4. Whether a Judge could sit in his own cause given the code of conduct.

Despite coalition governments in the Centre and two provinces, despite being in a minority in the Centre we have:

(a) given the country a national out look and unified it in the struggle against ethnicity, sectarianism, parochialism, terrorism.

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(b) We have given political stability to the country.

(c) We are the longest lasting civil government since 1985.

(d) We have created jobs by attracting foreign investment.

(e) All the provinces are working in harmony with the centres.

(f) Pakistan is no longer intentionally isolated.

(g) We have hosted the Asian Ombudsman conference, the Intellectuals conference, the Scientists conference, the OIC [Organization of the Islamic Conference] Foreign Minister conference, where the contact group on Kashmir was set up.

(h) Next year, Insha-Allah [God willing], we hope to host an Extraordinary Summit of the Organisation of Islamic Countries.

(i) We convinced America to pass the Brown Amendment without compromising on National Security and despite India's best efforts.

(j) We have received Dollar 150 million of our money back with more to come.

(k) And we are building or have built a Locomotive Factory and Heavy Mechanical Complex, Kohat Tunnel, Peshawar-Londikotal Road, Gwadar Dam, Akaum Dam, Keti Bandar Port, Gwadar Port, Indus Highway, Lahore Bypass, Sewan and Pakpattan airports, to name a few projects, which are monuments of our endeavours.

All this we have done in less than three years.

Confident of the support the people of the Four Federating Units, Azad Kashmir, FATA [Federally Administered Tribal Area] and the Northern Areas, we have launched a programme of social emancipation. This is truly a revolution based on humanism, on social democracy and on freeing the people from poverty and misery by providing gas, telephones, electricity,' roads, water supplies, schools, heath units to the neglected areas and segments of the country.

For we have always been the voice of the oppressed and downtrodden.

And the voice of modernisation. The government that introduced fax machines, digital pagers, satellite dishes, optic fibre, FM Radio, CNN in Pakistan.

We believe in a strong defence, in providing security to our people in an equitable economic order. We have clear goals. The Arrow is our election symbol. And we aim it at our target.

To break the chains of poverty, illiteracy, backwardness I request you, as lawyers and intellectuals, to assist us in our journey to a peaceful, progressive, prosperous and enlightened Pakistan.

Thank you.

Pakistan: Iran's Borujerdi, Pakistani Ministers Discuss Afghanistan

LD2505163296 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Pashto 1230 GMT 25 May 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Ala'eddin Borujerdi, Iranian deputy foreign minister for Asia and Pacific affairs, arrived in Islamabad to follow the momentum of talks for finding a peaceful solution to Afghanistan's problems. In this connection our correspondent has dispatched the following report to which we draw your attention:

[Correspondent Mohammad Tahir] Islamabad has been turned into a center of activities for finding a solution to the issue of Afghanistan. Efforts are underway to end the fighting in Afghanistan through talks.

Ala'eddin Borujerdi, Iranian deputy foreign minister, after visiting Afghanistan, today arrived in Islamabad. In Islamabad, Mr. Borujerdi met Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and Pakistani Foreign Secretary Najmuddin Shaikh. The purpose of the Iranian deputy foreign minister's visit to Islamabad is to end the current disputes between Kabul and Islamabad.

Dr. Borujerdi has expressed confidence concerning his talks with Afghanistan's opposition parties and with the government of President Rabbani.

Borujerdi expressed concern about reports that the Taleban opposition party is preparing for an attack on Kabul city. He pointed out that fighting will not resolve the Afghan crisis. Choosing such a path will not lead to any conclusion except the killing and injuring of innocent people.

The Iranian foreign minister expressed concern about the current tension between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Najmuddin Shaikh, after having a meeting with Mr. Borujerdi, said that the talks between the two sides had been very useful. He also praised Iranian endeavors in bringing peace to Afghanistan. He said that talks on this issue will continue between Tehran and Islamabad.

Mr. Shaikh added that Dr. Borujerdi briefed Pakistan's leaders on his talks with Afghanistan's leaders.

Yesterday evening, Dr. Borujerdi met Afghan leaders Golboddin Hekmatyar, 'Abdorrab Rasul Sayyaf,

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Mowlawi Yunis Khales, and Haji 'Abdol Qadir in Jalalabad. Today, Borujerdi met Pir Sayd Ahmad Gaylani in Islamabad.

Meanwhile, General 'Abdol Rashid Dostam, leader of Junbish-e Meli of Afghanistan [Islamic Movement of Afghanistan], has been continuing his talks today in Islamabad with Pakistan officials and with members of Afghan parties.

On the other hand, today Mahmud Mestiri, special envoy of the UN secretary general, met Golboddin Hekmatyar, leader of the Hezb-e Eslami [Islamic Party] in Jalalabad.

Pakistan: Gunmen Ambush Shiite Vehicles, Kill 4, Injure 12

BK2705092396 Hong Kong AFP in English 0849 GMT 27 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Islamabad, May 27 (AFP) — Four members of the minority Shiite community were killed and 12 injured when masked gunmen ambushed their vehicles near the northwestern Pakistani city of Dera Ismail Khan, senior officials said Monday [27 May].

Six men armed with automatic weapons fired indiscriminately at two Shiite pick-up vans Sunday, said Chaudhry Tanveer Ahmed, deputy inspector general of police. Two people had been arrested, he said, without providing details.

Three died on the spot while another died in a hospital in Dera Ismail Khan, 360 kilometers (225 miles) northwest of here.

Twelve others were wounded and the condition of one was serious, he added.

The incident was the first ahead of the annual Shiite ritual of Ashura which will be observed in Pakistan on Tuesday. It came despite strict security measures taken by the government to prevent sectarian trouble.

The local Shiite community blamed the attack on an extremist Sunni Muslim group Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan. Tanveer said the two arrested belonged to the group but it was too early to say if the shooting was a sectarian incident.

Ashura is observed on the 10th day of the Muslim month of Muharram to commemorate the martyrdom of Imam Hussain, the grandson of Prophet Muhammed who died in a battle in 680.

Shiites, who form about 20 percent of the 130-million strong Sunni-dominated Pakistan, hold mourning processions in big cities and towns during Moharram.

Although Hussain is revered by both communities, some militant Sunni groups oppose public mourning of his death by the Shiites.

Officials said the Shiites were on their way to the town of Rahman Garri, 20 kilometers (12 miles) north of Dera Islamil Khan, to attend a religious congregation when their vehicles were attacked.

Pakistan: 3 Injured in 'Powerful' Bomb Blast

BK2605091496 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Overseas Service in English 0800 GMT 26 May 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] A powerful bomb exploded at the suboffice of GPO [General Post Office] near airport in Lahore this morning. Police sources said three persons who were injured in the bomb blast were admitted in the Combined Military Hospital, Lahore, where one seriously injured later expired. The building of the post office was partially damaged. Investigations into the incident are in progress.

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